THE

HISTORY OF THE REVIVAL AND PROGRESS

OF

INDEPENDENCY

IN ENGLAND,

SINCE THE PERIOD OF THE REFORMATION;

WITH

AN INTRODUCTION, CONTAINING AN ACCOUNT OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRINCIPLES OF INDEPENDENCY IN THE AGE OF CHRIST AND HIS APOSTLES, AND OF THE GRADUAL DEPARTURE OF THE CHURCH INTO ANTICHRISTIAN ERROR, UNTIL THE TIME OF THE REFORMATION

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OF

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CHAPTER I.

THE INDEPENDENTS DURING THE PERIOD OF THE WESTMINSTER ASSEMBLY. 1643—1649.

WHILE civil war wasted the land, and the councils of the State were distracted by conflicting interests, the advocates of scriptural liberty and order were not uninterested spectators of the general scene. Their patriotism was nurtured by their religion. Their principles, or principles akin to theirs, lay, as they thought, at the basis of all those living influences by which society was to be regenerated. They shrank not from the lofty responsibilities to which providence was apparently calling them. Too much in advance of the age, in many respects, to be altogether successful, the Independents became, nevertheless, the nucleus of a party unmatched in history for attachment to the cause of just, impartial, and progressive liberty, for skill in controversy, heroism in war, and sagacity in statesmanship.

A rapid sketch of the general course of events will prepare the way for the details of our subject, during the period embraced by this chapter.

After the battle of Edgehill, the war was carried on with little vigour on the side of the parliamentary troops, mainly in consequence of the undefined purposes of the Earl of Essex, commander in chief, and of those who acted in concert with him. He had en-

gaged in the contest more from pique than principle, and was not prepared to push matters to an extremity. Many opportunities of pursuing the war with success were therefore thrown away. On more than one occasion, the very parliament was in jeopardy, through the near advances of the royalists. This stigma does not attach to such men as Lord Brooke, Hampden, and Cromwell, all of whom were resolutely bent upon the defence of the liberties of England, and the deliverance of the nation from its oppressors. The two former prevented Charles from marching into the metropolis, by the timely succour they afforded to the regiment of Holles at Brentford;* and the last had been occupied from the commencement of the war in raising and disciplining his famous Ironsides, a troop of warriors, one thousand strong, the like to which the world has never seen in any age, either before or since.

Unhappily for their country, Brooke and Hampden were numbered among the earliest victims of the war; the former at the siege of Lichfield, on the 2nd of March, 1643, after having reduced nearly all Warwickshire;† and the latter in the following June, in the skirmish at Chalgrove, near Oxford, while recruiting in the neighbourhood.‡ The loss of two such men at such a time, was a great blow to the popular cause. The death of Hampden, in particular, excited as much consternation in parliament as if

* Essex was roused to a sense of danger, only by the roaring of the cannon, which reached his ears in the House of Lords.

† See an able sketch of "The brave Lord Brooke," in Stoughton's Spiritual Heroes.

‡ Hampden was wounded between the shoulders by a random shot, on his fiftieth birthday, and died on the 24th of June, or six

their whole army had been destroyed. For a moment it was paralyzed; and even hesitated whether to proceed with the war or no. In a little time, however, the braver spirits of the day recovered from the recoil, and pursued their object with fresh determination. An opportunity had been afforded of ascertaining the real position of their party. The more timid and time-serving had revealed themselves in the season of disaster, and the cowardly and the courtly were henceforth distinguished from the patriotic. The people, moreover, came in to their aid, and impelled them forwards. When the peers proposed to the commons an immediate accommodation with the king, the whole city was up in remonstrance. The clergy and the common council alike denounced the overture, and a petition was presented against it by the Lord Mayor, at the head of the populace. From this time, the House of Lords lost much of the respect it had formerly received, and parliament was shut up to the course which its leaders had marked out. Notwithstanding the defection of some peers to the camp of the king, the Pyms and St. Johns were staunch, and led on the commons with fresh earnestness. They brought the wavering Essex round to a course of more decided hostility, and were repaid by the relief of Gloucester, and the victory at Newbury. Still, great danger impended, and new methods were devised for strengthening the popular

days after. His dying words were,—"O Lord, save my bleeding country. Have these realms in thy special keeping. Confound and level in the dust those who would rob the people of their liberty and lawful prerogative. Let the king see his error, and turn the hearts of his wicked counsellors from the malice and wickedness of their designs. Lord Jesus, receive my soul!"

cause against the hostility and treachery of the common foe.

We are thus brought to the period when the assistance of Scotland was solicited by parliament. This step was not taken without reluctance. It was already evident to many of the patriots, that the presbyterians of the north were ambitious of conferring their own ecclesiastical system on the people of England, in place of the now abolished hierarchy. For some time, their fears on this score prevented their seeking aid likely to be accompanied by unwelcome conditions. On the other hand, the liberties of England were in jeopardy, and it was not quite so plain, that presbyterianism might not be a suitable religion for both countries. It was determined, therefore, to try how far the matter might be adjusted, and eventually a compact was entered into between the two nations, known by the name of the "Solemn League and Covenant." For the purposes of the mere emergency, the measure was apparently successful. On the 19th of January, 1644, the Scotch army, 21,000 strong, entered England by Berwick, joined the armies of the parliament, and had its share in several engagements, with various success. In the end, however, England had to fight and win its own battles, and afterwards, to turn its arms against its temporary ally. The experiment of a religious adjustment proved a failure. Instead of fastening the yoke of their religious system upon the necks of the people of England, the Scotch people found themselves, after many provocations, at the foot of a conqueror, as generous as he was brave—a conqueror and a ruler who, while retaining possession of their country by a

military force, taught them the novel lesson of civil subordination, without robbing them of their religious freedom.

Descending from this very general view of public events, the policy adopted by parliament in relation to ecclesiastical matters claims our first consideration, leading as it did to most of those stormy scenes of division, debate, and controversy, in which all religious parties became involved, and amongst the rest the Independents.

Having abolished the hierarchy, parliament was under the necessity of supplying something in its place, or, at least, of determining the ecclesiastical position of the nation. Historically speaking, the best thing, and theoretically, the only just thing, would have been a declarative enactment, that henceforth religion should be wholly excluded from the business of legislation; and that, as speedily as possible, some equitable system should be instituted, whereby national property, previously appropriated by the Anglican church, should either be compounded for, or revert to the use of the state. In this case, the wisdom of parliament would have applied itself to one of the noblest objects ever presented to the minds of statesmen, namely, the liberation of religion from all state interference and control, with such provisions as should secure the state from detriment through religious movements and parties. Had this been done, the war between Charles and his parliament would soon have ended; the strife of parties during the perplexed period of the Commonwealth have been mitigated, if not avoided; and the nation, fenced off from the chief source of bad legislation and social divisions in subsequent years, would

have entered upon a career of unrivalled splendour. Had this been attempted by any considerable party in the state, even though without success, its name and story would have transcended in interest that of any, however illustrious, in the annals of our country.

That there were many whose views went as far as this, cannot be questioned. But their influence was very inconsiderable, and by no means equal to their numbers. Accustomed to persecution, and habituated in consequence to cherish their own convictions almost in secret, they did not feel inclined at this season to protrude their principles upon public attention. They were only too thankful for the unwonted liberty they enjoyed. It was a rare season for them. No longer was it necessary to meet in darkened chambers, in outbuildings of difficult access, in retired and unsuspected houses, barns, and hay-lofts; or under cover of the night, in gardens, fields, and copses. No longer were they in fear of spies, informers, and pursuivants. They could now meet their fellow citizens, their fellow townsmen, their fellow parishioners, without feeling that by the operation of iniquitous laws they were a degraded class. For a season, this immunity from long pending wrongs made them err in the excess of gratitude. As is too often the case in such circumstances, prosperity became a snare to them. Having manfully held fast by their principles, when the whole world besides was against them, they now held them somewhat too loosely, when the tide of human affairs turned, and the world ceased to frown.

Such was the actual position of those who held, at this period, the most correct, but in the opinion of their fellow-subjects, the most extreme and impracti-

cable views respecting the duty of the state in reference to religion. The thorough Independents—successors of the Brownists and Anabaptists of former times—quietly and peaceably rejoiced in the possession of their new liberties, while the great mass of the puritans, heated with enthusiasm, pressed forward in the path of ecclesiastical change. Of course there were here and there individual exceptions. Some strong things are expressed in a letter, written a little before this period, and published a short time after.* In the course of a very few years from the meeting of the long parliament, all men were compelled to take part in the discussion and altercation into which the nation was driven by the progress of events. The Independents then had their full share in the debate. But at present, and until opportunity served, they were at peace with all parties and amongst themselves.

In parliament, extreme views were entirely unknown. We have no proof that the thorough Independents were represented by a single member. Cromwell had not yet attained to those profound views, which at a later period marked his administration of public affairs. Vane was not yet an advocate for unlimited toleration, much less for separation between state and church. The great majority of both houses, unprepared for the crisis at which the nation had arrived, scarcely knew how to proceed. Their views were for the most part of a negative character. They were unanimous in their hatred of popery. They were nearly agreed in their hostility to prelacy. Spiritual tyranny, as exemplified in the

* The Saint's Apology.

institutions and practices of a now abolished hierarchy; its High Commission, its Star Chamber, its ear-cropping, nose-slitting, and face-branding; its pillories, fines, confiscations, and imprisonments;—was their soul's abhorrence. Yet, what to substitute in the place of the former things, they knew not. They only knew what they would *not* have. All was undefined. Their training had been essentially vicious, and unfitted them for the work of legislators. Episcopalian by habit, presbyterian in fancy, erastian in principle, they were completely at a loss. The Independent minority were scarcely in better circumstances. The stigma of separation still adhered to them, and they naturally desired to do nothing that might prevent it from wearing off. They would act inoffensively and in a forbearing spirit. They sought to be comprehended in the general scheme of liberty. They only desired a share in the newly acquired birth-right. The congregational Independents, out of the house, petitioned "for a Toleration of some Congregations to enjoy an Independent Government, and to be exempt from the Government which shall be established."* The congregational Independents within the house,—for they were all of this class only,—could do nothing more than echo the voice of this petition. While parliament had thus no decided opinion of its own, it was necessary that its measures should be of a negative rather than positive character. It could demolish the institutions of a byegone period; but it knew not how to reconstruct.

Such a state of things, however, could not be of long

* This was in 1641. Edwards's Reasons against the Independent Government. Introduction.

continuance. Liberty would speedily become anarchy, and all would be lost if practical measures were not decided upon. The most advisable course appeared to be to summon an assembly of ministers of religion from various parts of the kingdom, and to abide by their decision. Various circumstances favoured such a step. It would afford breathing-time. Whatever might be the ecclesiastical system ultimately adopted, all parties would be conciliated in the interval. The plan would recommend itself by its moderation to a large class of religious people scattered throughout the kingdom, who wavered in their duty between king and parliament. The demands of the puritans, and in particular of the London ministers—the most clamorous of all for immediate reform—would so far be satisfied. Possibly, the Scotch nation might be induced to render the popular cause their zealous aid, when they saw the model of their Assembly copied in some measure in an assembly convoked by the parliament of England.

A considerable time, however, was consumed in carrying out the project. Charles was at present formally acknowledged as king, and his sanction was to be obtained, if possible. A correspondence had to be carried on between the parliament and the General Assembly of Scotland. A greater degree of unanimity had to be secured in parliament itself respecting the propriety and details of the proposed plan. The end was brought about therefore by tedious stages. In April, 1642, parliament had resolved to reform the government and liturgy of the Church of England, and to establish learned and preaching ministers throughout the whole kingdom, and "for the better effecting thereof, speedily to have consultation with godly and

learned divines." In June, parliament wrote to the assembly of Scotland, acquainting it with their affairs. A reply was received, in which the assembly offered their "prayers and endeavours" for furthering their great undertaking. Parliament wrote back again, promising to call "an assembly of godly and learned divines, so soon as the royal assent could be obtained."* In November of the same year, the royal assent was sought. In its remonstrance to the king, parliament expressed its desire that "there may be a general synod of the most grave, pious, learned, and judicious divines of this island, assisted with some from foreign parts, who may consider of all things necessary for the peace and good government of the church, and represent the result of their consultations unto the parliament, to be there allowed of and confirmed, and receive the stamp of authority." This resolution was passed in a full house, by a majority of eleven only. The majority, however, carried their point. A bill embodying the resolution was proposed to his Majesty. His Majesty rejected it. Parliament, nothing daunted, resolved to proceed with it as one of its own ordinances, and to carry it into effect on its own authority. This ordinance was passed on June 12th, 1643, and on the 1st of July, the Westminster Assembly met for the first time in Henry the Seventh's Chapel.

Parliament thus committed itself to a line of policy from which there was no receding. They had now summoned into being an anomalous ecclesiastical court, whose deliberations could not fail to agitate, and whose decisions could not fail to divide the public mind; a court whose authority nominally subordinate to par-

* Printed Acts of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland. Rushworth, v. 391.

liament, might nevertheless become virtually paramount, and the result of whose proceedings, none, however sagacious, could predict.

Modern apologists have been accustomed to lay much stress on the circumstance, that the assembly was summoned to *advise*, and not to legislate. A very little reflection, however, will serve to show the futility of the distinction thus made, as well as of the plea founded on it. It is admitted, that the assembly was not an ecclesiastical synod, in the proper sense of the term, but the creature of parliament, by whom its several members were appointed and paid, and its various functions and duties defined. Still, the right of parliament to call such a convention implied the right to determine that the nation should have a religion, what it should be, and how it should be maintained. This was the fundamental error of the whole proceeding, against which the character and abilities of the divines composing the assembly, however high, cannot be set. Had parliament summoned a conclave of angels, the objection would have been equally strong. But it is also evident that the assembly was virtually called to the exercise of legislative functions; as much so, as if it had been a committee of both houses for taking the initiative in providing a religion for the nation.* The incapacity of parliament, implied in the expedient of summoning a body of clergymen to perform this part of their supposed duties for them, shows only more clearly the real nature of the business devolved upon the assembly. The language already quoted from the original resolution of the House on

* In strict legal form, it was such a committee, the divines being paid agents of that committee, as lawyers might be in other cases.

this subject is also explicit. The assembly were to deliberate on "all things" necessary for "the peace and good government of the church," and to "represent the result of their consultations to the parliament, to be there allowed of and confirmed, and receive the stamp of authority." Again, the ordinance appointing it declared it to be "for the settling of the government and liturgy of the Church of England;" while in the body of the bill we find the following terms—"Whereas it hath been declared and resolved by the lords and commons assembled in parliament, that the present church government by archbishops, bishops, their chancellors, commissaries, deans, deans and chapters, archdeacons, and other ecclesiastical officers depending upon the hierarchy, is evil, and justly offensive and burdensome to the kingdom; a great impediment to reformation and growth of religion; and very prejudicial to the state and government of this kingdom; and that therefore, they are resolved that the same shall be taken away, and that such a government shall be settled in the church, as may be most agreeable to God's holy word, and most apt to procure and preserve the peace of the church at home, and nearer agreement with the Church of Scotland, and other reformed churches abroad; and for the better effecting thereof, and for the vindicating and clearing of the doctrine of the Church of England from all false calumnies and aspersions, it is thought fit and necessary to call an assembly of learned, godly, and judicious divines, to consult and advise of such matters and things, touching the premises, as shall be proposed unto them by both or either of the houses of parliament."*

* "An Ordinance, &c." 1648; Hanbury, ii. 199.

From this it is evident that parliament had determined upon two things: first, that a reformed religion should be established; and secondly, that the assembly's advice and counsel should be followed in the reformation to be made; reserving to itself the power of review and final authorisation. The last point was a matter of course. To have acted otherwise would have been constituting the assembly an arbitrary court, with powers greater than those of the abolished hierarchy. Yet on this very point the advocates, or rather apologists, of the assembly, from Baxter downwards, have mainly rested their defence. It cannot be questioned that, in so far as the calling of the assembly was a *bona fide* measure, it was the design of parliament to make its decisions theirs. Every member of that assembly entered upon his duties as a virtual legislator in matters ecclesiastical. Every member, moreover, was actuated by a conviction of this nature; and to suppose otherwise is to impute to the whole synod the most solemn trifling, and to characterise their labours as the most learned child's-play, the world has ever witnessed. If any thing further were needed upon this point, it might be asked, why were members of both houses added to the assembly, and the power of nominating its clerical members confined to knights of the shire? The presence of the thirteen peers and twenty commoners might have been dispensed with, if the *opinion* of the godly divines was all that was required. But the proceedings of the assembly, as they come under our notice, will show the real nature of the powers with which they were invested.

Various opinions have been entertained respecting the composition and merits of this celebrated body. Praise and blame have been administered with equal

lavishness. Some, with Clarendon, have decried it in the most unworthy invectives;* others, following the judgment of the too latitudinarian Baxter, have become its warmest apologists;† while a third party, occupying the lofty position of John Milton, and impatient of every thing that might be regarded as redeeming merely, have considered exclusively the general character and tendency of its proceedings. Unquestionably, some few of the members of the assembly were men of genius, and a greater number men of learning; but as a body, they were not above the average character of the clergy of the day. Selected from various parts of the kingdom, on personal grounds quite as much as any other, it would have been impossible to pronounce a judgment beforehand on the kind of appearance they would make on their first gathering; and yet it would not have been difficult, could their protracted session also have been foreseen, to predict that five years incessant discussion on matters of a serious and pressing nature, would operate as a powerful if not healthy stimulus on the minds of all, and probably bring into notice some rarer spirits, whose energies might otherwise have slumbered amidst the quiet duties of parochial life. The last mentioned result was in fact realized.

Seldom has the world beheld a more animating scene than was to be witnessed every day of the week,

* Clarendon writes: "Some of them infamous in their lives and conversations, and most of them of very mean parts in learning, if not of scandalous ignorance." Hist. of Rebellion, i. 531.

† Baxter writes: "The divines there congregated were men of eminent learning, godliness, ministerial abilities, and fidelity, &c." Life, i. 93.

Saturdays and Sundays excepted, in the Jerusalem Chamber, where the assembly for the most part held its sessions. The hall in which Henry the Fourth breathed his last became a theatre of life, in which passions, thoughts, and purposes as earnest, and, if suffered to prevail, as sanguinary as those of the royal crusader, contended for the mastery; passions, thoughts, and purposes which the rising power of Cromwell, strong as death itself, could scarcely compose.* The ground of the contest was narrow, and the combatants comparatively few; but on the issue depended the religious and political welfare of a whole nation. The great majority of the assembly were presbyterians, whose views were formed more or less nearly upon those of John Knox and the kirk of Scotland. The object of this party, headed by the Scotch commissioners, Henderson, Gillespie, Rutherford, and Baillie,† was to assimilate the ecclesiastical condition of England to that of Scotland. Next to them were the Erastians, a considerable body, and rendered respect-

* Shakspeare, in his "King Henry the Fourth," thus makes this the scene of the monarch's death :—

"*K. Henry.* Doth any name particular belong
Unto the lodging where I first did swoon ?
Warwick. 'Tis called Jerusalem, my noble lord.
K. Henry. Laud be to God! even there my life must end.
It hath been prophesied to me many years,
I should not die but in Jerusalem ;
Which vainly I supposed the Holy Land.
But bear me to that chamber; there I'll lie ;
In that Jerusalem shall Harry die."

† The Scotch Commissioners had no vote in the assembly ; but a deference was paid to them, on account of their relation to the General Assembly of Scotland, which in its results was more potent than the power of voting. They were the real leaders of the presbyterian party in the assembly.

able by the alliance of the great John Selden, as well as by the learning of such men as Coleman, and Lightfoot. Their object, however, was quite undefined throughout. Hence, the course they might take could not be reckoned upon, excepting at a later period, when presbyterian bigotry compelled them to join the Independents. The last named were a very small minority, respecting whom further details will be afforded presently. Besides these were a few episcopalians, of Archbishop Usher's school, who, however, never acted as a party, but, preserving their individuality at first, gradually died away, and finally disappeared from the assembly altogether.* The lay members of the assembly were pretty equally divided amongst all these parties. The principal of those who took an active part in the proceedings were the Earls of Manchester and Pembroke, Viscount Saye, and Philip, Lord Wharton, from the upper house; and Sir Harry Vane, junior, St. John, Selden, Rouse, and Whitelocke, from the lower.

Such, in general terms, was the composition of the famous convention by whom the religious affairs of the nation were to be settled. It was hardly probable that from an assembly thus called and constituted satisfactory measures would proceed. Containing within itself the elements of division, it was not likely to be unanimous on matters of importance; and from the fact that the majority were presbyterians of an intolerant school, it might be inferred that every disputed point would be pressed to a division, and carried with a high hand. This, it might have been anticipated, would call forth resistance, not only from within,

* Many of the episcopalians summoned to the assembly refused to appear, in obedience to an injunction from the king to that effect.

but also from without, where the assembly, from the commencement, had to meet the assaults of dissatisfied opponents of various classes. Easy as it might seem in theory to call together a body of impartial divines, of simple faith and manners, whose decisions might be harmonious and suitable to the exigencies of the nation; it was really impracticable. In the course of time, moreover, the functions of the assembly were multiplied, and its powers enlarged. Besides undertaking to provide a religion for the people, consisting of doctrine and polity, with suitable directories, these divines acted for the time being as the spiritual court of the nation, and were invested with authority to judge respecting the orthodoxy or heterodoxy of their fellow-subjects; to appoint chaplains to the army and navy, ministers and lecturers to the various parishes vacated by the deposition of the old clergy, and collegiate masterships to the universities; to examine candidates for the ministry, and grant certificates of character and fitness; to provide the members of their own body with suitable appointments, to forbid preachers whose doctrines were deemed erroneous, and to prevent the formation of new churches until they had determined what kind of polity was sanctioned by the Word of God. In all these functions they had the sanction of parliament, as before them the court of Star Chamber had the sanction of the king; and in both cases the injustice was the same in kind, though not in degree. Heretics and schismatics were sought out, brought up before them in arrest, and punished. Anabaptists were held up to derision, and persecuted. Antinomians were hunted after by a special committee appointed for the purpose. The reader of Lightfoot's Journal cannot fail to be struck with the fact that almost every day,

before the discussion on points of doctrine or government, there came up before the assembly practical questions of the kind adverted to, affecting the liberty of the subject. Practically, therefore, the assembly assumed very much of the authority of the abolished hierarchy; and besides irritating the public mind, did more than any thing else, by its intermeddling with existing religious parties, to divide the kingdom into the various sects which it was its professed object to prevent.

It was in the light of such facts as these that Milton opposed the assembly with so much vehemence. From his very soul he hated all tyranny, from whatever quarter emanating. But his hatred was combined with a lofty disdain in this instance, because of the contrary professions and protestations of the parties exercising this authority. It will not be out of place here to adduce his views on this subject. The vindication of so great a name is not unworthy the space requisite for such a purpose, in the history of a party of which he was so eminent a member.

In his "History of Britain,"* Milton writes as follows: "If the state were in this plight, religion was not in much better; to reform which a certain number of divines were called, neither chosen by any rule or custom ecclesiastical, nor eminent for either piety or knowledge above others left out; only as each member of parliament in his private fancy thought fit, so elected one by one. The most part of them were such as had preached and cried down, with great show of zeal, the avarice and pluralities of bishops and prelates; that one cure of souls was a full employment for one spiritual pastor how able soever,

* Milton's Prose Works, p. 503.

if not a charge rather above human strength. Yet these conscientious men (ere any part of the work was done for which they had come together, and that on the public salary) wanted not boldness, to the ignominy and scandal of their pastor-like profession, and especially of their boasted reformation, to seize into their hands, or not unwillingly to accept (besides one, sometimes two or more of the best livings) collegiate masterships in the universities, rich lectures in the city, setting sail to all winds that might blow gain into their covetous bosoms: by which means these great rebukers of non-residence, among so many distant cures, were not ashamed to be seen so quickly pluralists and non-residents themselves, to a fearful condemnation doubtless by their own mouths. And yet the main doctrine for which they took such pay, and insisted upon with more vehemence than gospel, was but to tell us in effect, that their doctrine was worth nothing, and the spiritual power of their ministry less available than bodily compulsion; persuading the magistrate to use it, as a stronger means to subdue and bring in conscience, than evangelical persuasion: distrusting the virtue of their own spiritual weapons, which were given them, if they might be rightly called, with full warrant of sufficiency to pull down all thoughts and imaginations that exalt themselves against God. But while they taught compulsion without convincement, which not long before they complained of as executed unchristianly against themselves; their intents are clear to have been no better than antichristian: setting up a spiritual tyranny by a secular power, to the advancing of their own authority above the magistrate, whom they would have made their executioner, to punish church-delinquencies, whereof civil

laws have no cognizance. And well did their disciples manifest themselves to be no better principled than their teachers, trusted with committeeships and other gainful offices, upon their commendations for zealous, (and as they sticked not to term them,) godly men; but executing their places like children of the devil, unfaithfully, unjustly, unmercifully, and where not corruptly, stupidly. So that between them the teachers, and these the disciples, there hath not been a more ignominious and mortal wound to faith, to piety, to the work of reformation, nor more cause of blaspheming given to the enemies of God and truth, since the first preaching of reformation."

Such was the opinion of John Milton respecting the merits of the assembly,—an opinion deliberately formed, and published many years after it had ceased to be. Excepting one or two harsh expressions, and bearing in mind that he deals with the proceedings of the body as a whole, we see nothing in this celebrated passage but what may be substantiated by the facts of the case. To characterize it as an effusion of spleen, merely because his "Treatise on Divorce" was harshly dealt with by some of the members of the assembly, is quite beside the mark. Whatever his just resentment of the treatment he received, it is not likely that that great man, of tried and stable virtue in all the eventful scenes through which it was his lot to pass, would have suffered it to prevail so far or so long as is implied in this supposition. The several items of the accusation are so many alleged *facts*, and the question with the impartial should respect those facts, not the animus supposed to have been the occasion of their being adduced. If the language of Milton is compared with the actual records of the assembly,

it will not be found far from the truth; and there is abundant evidence in the other writings of this sagacious statesman and lover of liberty that, as the character and aims of the assembly became more fully developed, he detected the error that had been committed by parliament in calling it, as well as the unfitness of its members for the responsible duties to which they had been summoned.

It is affirmed, however, that there are good grounds for believing that Milton's enmity to the assembly was personal. "It deserves to be noticed," says Mr. Orme, "that his work on Divorce is dedicated to this very assembly, as well as to the long parliament, both of which he afterwards so severely denounced. In that dedication, he speaks of them as 'a select assembly,'—'of so much piety and wisdom,'—'a learned and memorable synod,'—'in which piety, learning, and prudence were housed.'"* The same writer adds, "This dedication was written *two* years after the assembly had met, and when its character must have been well known."

Mr. Orme's authority is deservedly high for general impartiality and accuracy; but in the present instance, his zeal in behalf of the "fair fame" of the assembly, has led to a two-fold error. Admitting that the treatise on Divorce is dedicated "To the Parliament of England with the Assembly," the phrases he has culled from that dedication, which extends over several pages, by no means bear the construction which the reader of Mr. Orme's work would necessarily put upon them. Milton does not speak of the assembly as *a* select assembly, in the sense of their being an *elite*, or choice body of divines;

* Life and Times of Richard Baxter; vol. i. 89.

but in the sense of their being selected for a particular purpose by parliament. The sentence in which the expression occurs is as follows:—"If it were seriously asked, renowned Parliament, select Assembly! &c." The phrases, "of so much piety and wisdom here assembled," and "I crave it from the piety, the learning, and the prudence which is housed in this place,"—relate not to the assembly, but to the parliament; or, on the most favourable construction, to both. The words, "a learned and memorable synod," are not predicated of the Westminster assembly at all. The entire sentence is,—"To expedite these knots were *worthy* a learned and memorable synod;" that is, *any* learned and memorable synod that might be convened for the purpose. Supposing, therefore, that this dedication had been written two years after the assembly had met, no inference could be fairly deduced from it respecting Milton's approval of its character.* The truth is, however, that the dedication was written almost immediately after the assembly had been summoned; since the assembly met for the first time on July 1st, 1643, and yet this treatise is referred to as having been before the public some time, in a subsequent work, "The Judgment of Martin Bucer," published by Milton in 1644. It is expressly affirmed in that work, that it was written

* Mr. Stoughton, in p. 149 of his "Spiritual Heroes," makes matters worse, by packing Mr. Orme's selected phrases into one sentence, and attributing that sentence to Milton! A page before this, Mr. S. does Milton similar injustice, by omitting some important words in an alleged quotation. "Milton," he writes, "has aspersed this convention, declaring that it was eminent neither for piety or knowledge." Milton declared no such thing; his words are,—"nor eminent for either piety or knowledge *above others left out*." This is a very different thing.

and published in order to convince those who vituperated the former treatise on Divorce on the ground of its containing novel heresy, that Martin Bucer held the same views. From all this, it is evident that there is no foundation for the aspersions in question; and Milton's testimony against the assembly and its proceedings claims to be received as the honest and deliberate testimony of a contemporary.

Turning from this general view of the subject, we now proceed to a more particular notice of the proceedings in which the Independents* had so large a share. The leaders of this party were Dr. Thomas

* A few words here on the name *Independent*, as it came to be gradually applied to the party. We have seen how first Jacob, then Robinson, employed the word in their writings. After that time, it was used now and then, sometimes by their successors, and sometimes by their opponents, until at last, it became more fixed. In 1621, Paul Baynes applies it to the presbyterians, in p. 13 of his "Diocesan's Trial." "We," he writes, referring to the presbyterians, "affirm that all churches were single congregations, equal and independent, each on other, in regard of subjection." In 1644, Sidrach Simpson, in his reply to Forbes, speaks of his party as being branded "with the name of Independents—a name which formerly was proper unto those who stood for presbyterial government." In the same year, Thomas Welde, a New England Independent, in his reply to Thomas Rathbone, says,—"If the word Independent be rightly taken for one church that is not under the power of another, or in subjection to a presbytery, but as having received power from Christ to govern herself according to his laws, then all accord to it. But if the word be abusively taken, as it is often with the vulgar, for such a society as are neither subject to magistracy, nor regard the counsel of other churches, but are a conceited and self-sufficient people, that stand only upon their own legs, then we have cause to be shy of a word that may render us odious without cause!" In the same year, presbyterian Edwards writes in his "Antapologia,"—"The old Separatists could not endure to be called Brownists or Bar-

Goodwin, Philip Nye, Jeremiah Burroughes, William Bridge, and Sidrach Simpson, already mentioned as exiles for conscience sake in the days of Laud.* They were generally known afterward as "the five," and the "apologists," on account of their concerted publication of the "Apologetical Narration." The other members of this party in the assembly were William Greenhill, of Stepney, celebrated as the expositor of Ezekiel; William Carter, of London, characterised by Lightfoot as "one that will dissent from everything that crosseth his opinion;" William Green, of Pentecomb; Peter Sterry, of London, a friend of Vane's, and afterwards one of Cromwell's chaplains; and Joseph Caryl, of Lincoln's Inn, best known by his commentary on the book of Job. These were all the "divines" certainly known to have been of the Independent party, in the assembly. In point of numbers, therefore, even if we add the names of Lords Saye and Wharton, and Sir Harry Vane, they were a very small minority. But they were by no means insignificant. Well bred and educated, of great natural gifts, of tried conscientiousness, and inured by the times in which they lived to the

rowists; so you will not endure the titles of Schism, Separation, Independency; but you call it the 'Congregational government,' and 'the church way,' and 'an entire, full, complete power;' but by no means 'Independent government,'—that will not be endured." He afterwards adds, "'Independent government' hath been preached for at Margaret's church in Westminster, and the city of London, in those words; so that I wonder how you dare make such a flourish." From this period, the title of Independent became more fixed, as the name of the party; and eventually, a political, as well as an ecclesiastical idea, became attached to it, because of the liberty sought for by the advocates of the latter.

* See back—Vol. III. p. 187.

endurance of hardship, and disciplined by their position and the scenes through which they had passed to force of thought, character, and speech, they were generally more than a match for their opponents. Unhappily, the reports of the discussions in which they took so prominent a part are chiefly from the pens of antagonists; but even from these, it is not difficult to arrive at the above conclusion. Baillie writes of them as having "plenty of learning, wit, and eloquence, and above all, boldness and stiffness to make it out;" as astonishing him by their "great learning, quickness, and eloquence, together with their great courtesy and discretion in speaking;" as "debating all things which came within twenty miles of their quarters," and being ready with "replies, ever quick and high, at will;" and worst of all, as regarding "nothing at all, what all the reformed or all the world say, if their sayings be not backed with convincing scripture or reason. All human testimonies they declaim against as a popish argument."*

Indeed it would appear, if we may judge from the testimony of this writer—a sufficient authority, seeing that he was both a leader and representative of the party—that the presbyterians had more than a misgiving, as to their ability to argue down Independency and the Independents. A kind of panic fear seized them, whenever they approached the great question. From time to time they seek to stave it off, although afterwards unjustly blaming the Indepen-

* Baillie's Letters, *passim*. See Edwards, also, to the same effect. "The authority of your names, holding their opinions—having the reputation of scholars, and of excellent preachers—whereby you are cried up of many, and so much followed." Antapologia, p. 235.

dents for the delay. They confess that "many things that come to be handled in the assembly are new to us all, and obscure." They look to the foreign churches of their own order in Zealand, Holland, France, and Switzerland, for help. They write to them secretly, with directions to cry down Independency in their letters to the assembly; alternately coaxing and threatening the tardy, and returning huge thanks to those that comply. The letter of the Wallachrian churches comes "wonderfully opportunely," says Ballie, who had procured it through his cousin Spang. "It has much vexed the minds of these men," he adds, referring to the Independents, who, shrewd as they were, had no suspicion of the cunning bye-play of their opponents. "And yet we expect from the synod of Zealand now sitting, *more* water to be put in their wine."* But even this fails. The Independents are still a terror to them—more than they are willing to confess any where but amongst themselves. They have only one hope left, and that is in their Scotch army. Speaking of the debate on the eldership, Baillie writes: "This is a point of high consequence; and upon no other we expect so great difficulty, except alone on Independency, wherewith we purpose not to meddle in haste, till it please God to advance *our army*, which we expect will much assist our arguments." Again, referring to some delay in bringing on the discussion of the dependency of particular congregations on the apostles, he writes: "We indeed did not much care for delays, till the breath of our *army* might blow upon us some more favour and strength!"

Such is the testimony of Ballie, as to the compara-

* Baillie's Letters, *passim*. Multitudes of passages might be added of the same kind.

tive moral strength of the two parties. Turning to Lightfoot,* the opinion advanced above is confirmed by his report of the debates and other acts of the assembly. His notes betray strong prejudice against the Independents, sometimes expressed, but more frequently evinced by the manner in which their arguments are recorded, as contrasted with those of their opponents; yet even from these imperfect and partial memoranda, it is evident with what breadth and force, and often, it must be confessed, pertinacity of reasoning, they maintained their views, not only against such men as Henderson, Gillespie, and Marshall, but Gattaker and Selden. Goodwin and Nye in particular, appear to have been a match on all points for the opponents of either side."†

High, however, as was the character of the dissenting minority, more especially of "the five," they did not, on entering the assembly, represent the Independency of the country at large, neither were their principles and practices altogether such as are advocated by the Independents of a later day.‡ The following particulars are necessary to vindicate their consistency, and to correct some of the erroneous statements published in recent times respecting this portion of our national history.

The "apologists," on their return, from Holland, brought back with them the ecclesiastical opinions disseminated by Robinson, Ames, and Ainsworth, modified in some respects by those of Johnson.

* Lightfoot was an Erastian, with episcopalian leanings. The same may be said of Selden and Coleman.

† After all, the documents in which the Independents justified their own dissent from the majority of the assembly, are their best vindication before the world and all time.

‡ See back, vol. iii. p. 233, 234.

They disclaimed the name and opinions of the Brownists and anabaptists, and considered it a stigma to be designated Independents. They were opposed to the very idea of a national church. On this point their views accorded with those of Henry Burton, given in a former chapter.* They abhorred prelacy, as the source of all the evils that had afflicted the nation. They were not episcopalians, but regarded the bishops and presbyters of apostolic times as identical officers. They were not presbyterians, in the conventional sense of the term; and saw no authority in scripture for government by classes, presbyteries, and synods. They were in fact Congregational Independents, and held that every local church was complete in itself for all the purposes of government and discipline. At the same time, they were in favor of associations of churches thus self-governed, for purposes of mutual counsel and friendly confederation. They also held, at this time, what Smyth termed the doctrine of a "tri-formed presbytery,"† or of a triple eldership, composed of pastor, teacher, and ruling elders, in every local church; and instead of giving the church, in the body of its assembled members, sole power to determine upon all matters affecting it, regarded the pastor, teacher, and ruling elders, as an executive government in the name of the church, amenable to it, and subject to its revision. In this latter point, they differed from some churches of their order then in existence, and followed the middle course between Brownism or popular government, and Johnsonism, or government by a congregational eldership.‡

* See back, vol. iii. pp. 237, 238.

† Ibid. p. 25.

‡ This was the course recommended by Robinson in the Amster-

The chief error of these men respected the third principle of Independency. They never advocated the broad doctrine of separation between church and state. Had they done so, their names would not have been found in the roll of the Westminster Assembly. They conceded to the civil power rights which never legitimately belonged to it. They would have allowed the parliament to send the gospel to the heathen, and to provide a gospel ministry for England. They did not consider their churches exempt from "giving account to, or being censurable by," the civil magistrate. They thought that the magistrate might interpose his authority to "back the sentence" of churches refusing communion with "churches miscarrying." And referring to the ordinance of parliament convening the assembly of divines, they speak of it as "a way of God, wisely assumed by the prudence of the state," and express their willingness, as members of the assembly, to yield as far as "light and conscience" would permit, to the decision of the body, respecting questions of discipline.

Such were the actual principles of "the five" on entering the Westminster Assembly. They were Congregational Independents of the New England order, and, in respect to the great principles of civil and religious liberty, were behind many who had no summons to attend the meetings of the convention.

A reference to some of the transactions of the assembly will confirm this view.

dam dispute. See back, vol. iii. p. 21. For all the particulars stated above, see the "Apologetical Narration," published by "the five," in 1643. The object of this publication was to set the exiles right with the parliament. It created much excitement at the time, and occasioned many replies.

Soon after the assembly was convened, parliament appointed certain commissioners of both houses to repair to the general assembly of Scotland, for the purpose of "stirring up that nation to send some competent forces in aid of this parliament and kingdom, against the many armies of the popish and prelatical party and their adherents."* The commissioners appointed were John, Earl of Rutland, Sir William Armine, Bart., Sir Henry Vane, the younger, Mr. Hatcher, and Mr. Darley. The three last mentioned repaired to Scotland accordingly, and with them Stephen Marshall and Philip Nye, members of the Westminster Assembly, to advise in matters ecclesiastical.† The result of this commission was the solemn league and covenant, by which the assumed representatives of both nations entered into a compact to perpetuate the church of Scotland; to reform the religion of England and Ireland; to extirpate popery, prelacy, superstition, heresy, schism, and profanity; to preserve the rights and privileges of parliament, and defend the king's person and authority in the defence of the true religion and liberties of the kingdom; to bring to trial malignants; to make arrangements for mutual defence against all foes; and, humbling

* Parliament was led to this step under pressure of circumstances. The royalists, at this time, had the best of the fight, excepting at Wakefield, where Lord Fairfax defeated them, in May, 1643, and in some lesser engagements in which Cromwell's invincibles were engaged. On the 18th of July, 1643, the assembly proposed to parliament to ordain a fast, on account of Sir William Waller's recent defeat at Devizes, and in "regard of the two late disasters in the north and in the west." Lightfoot's Journal, Works, xiii. 6.

† The expression used is, "such things as shall concern *this* church." So that parliament still considered that there was a Church of England. Acts of general assembly, p. 166.

themselves before God, to amend their lives according to his gospel.* This was indeed a solemn and weighty business: one in which Vane and Nye would have had no part, had they been anything more than congregational Independents. Much has been said of Vane's sagacity in having this compact termed a "league," as well as a "covenant," and in promoting the insertion of a clause to the effect that the reformation to be accomplished should be according to the "word of God," as well as "the example of the best reformed churches." Undoubtedly his object was to leave an opening for the enquiry, whether presbyterianism or Independency was most accordant with the word of God; but that he and Nye should have conceded to any assembly the right to determine such a matter for a whole nation, shows that they were far from understanding aright the great principle of liberty of conscience.

Further light, confirmatory of these views, is afforded by what took place in the assembly, and in the nation, in connexion with this covenant. Before Vane and Nye returned to England, they had forwarded a draft of the covenant to the parliament, by whom it was sent to the Westminster Assembly for consideration. It was approved of, after a few verbal, and some more important alterations;† but not without some sharp contention with one of their number. Dr. Cornelius Burgess, of Watford, one of the opposers, a moderate

* See the various clauses of this document in Neal, ii. 51—53.

† The clause, "according to the Word of God," had this "explanation" annexed to it,—"As far as in my conscience I shall conceive it to be according to the Word of God."—Lightfoot, Works xiii. 10.

episcopalian, objected to the clause respecting prelacy, and pleaded conscience in refusing to sign a covenant directed, in part, against his views. For one whole day and part of another, he agitated the assembly on this point; and when the assent of the synod was sent up to the commons, he protested against it, and put up a petition that he might have liberty to bring in his exceptions. The commons were more patient than the divines, and referred the petition back to their consideration. The greater part of another day was occupied in rebutting this petition, and scolding and suspending the author of it, together with Mr. Price, of St. Paul's, Covent Garden, who sympathised with him. The next day Mr. Price relented, confessed his error, and was "discharged." Burgess, however, still held out, and was excluded from the body, until he had given it satisfaction. In the end, he also yielded, begged pardon, and was restored to his place; but not until after some delay. Such was the commencement of their proceedings. The wrath of some of the members was excessive against the poor doctor,* whose only fault was that he wavered, and fell short of being a hero. Nor do we find any of the Independents asserting liberty of conscience in his favour, or speaking a single word in his defence. Their turn had not come yet.

On the 25th of September, the House of Commons and the assembly met in St. Margaret's church, to take the covenant. After the introductory service,

* Lightfoot vents his ire in a remarkable manner; calls him a "wretch," and writes of his "devilish ends," and "intolerable impudency." The doctor, however, regained Lightfoot's esteem, and performed some humiliating offices afterwards against other tender consciences, especially against the antinomians.

during which Mr. White prayed "near upon an hour," Nye made an exhortation from the pulpit, and Henderson another from "the seat where he sat." Then Nye read the covenant, clause by clause. At every clause the whole congregation signified their assent by holding up the hand; and when the whole had been thus publicly adopted, they signed the document in the chancel. About two hundred and twenty signed the first day, the remainder afterwards. The Independents of the assembly appear to have done so without hesitation. One member only refused, and was excluded from the assembly, as well as deposed from his living. After this the covenant was enforced upon the nation at large, beginning with the metropolis. No public office, ecclesiastical or civil, could be held without subscription; and thus in the name of liberty a new tyranny commenced. By direction of parliament, recusant ministers in London were to be suspended, and divines of the assembly were required to occupy their pulpits in their stead.* In some instances, these pulpits, with the livings attached to them, were retained afterwards. We have no certain evidence whether the Independents of the assembly protested in any shape against these proceedings.† At a later period, when the pressure of an attempted uniformity reached them, and more

* Order of October 12, 1643, signed "Henry Elsing."

† Mr. Hanbury is much too partial on this point. Vol. ii. p. 204. In this page also he writes of "the five," as of men whose names will ever stand pre-eminent for their regard for the inalienable rights of conscience; and who contested on behalf of the *utmost latitude* of religious freedom." We honour the men for what they did; but what shall we say to the *facts* related in the text, and such as are about to be adduced?

correct views had been disseminated from without, they appear to have resisted many of the intolerant proposals of the presbyterians; but at this time they were far from understanding what was due to the consciences of others. They even allowed the assembly to put a stop to the formation of Independent churches, until the question of polity had been settled; * and when some parties sent up to the assembly a petition expounding their sentiments in favour of toleration, they were forward, if not violent, in opposing its consideration.

Both Baillie and Lightfoot concur in their testimony to the latter point. "Some of the anabaptists," says the former, "came to the assembly's scribe with a letter, inveighing against our covenant, and carrying with them a printed sheet of 'Admonitions to the Assembly from an old English Anabaptist at Amsterdam, to give a full liberty of conscience to all sects, and to beware of keeping any Sabbath, and such like.' The scribe offered to read all in the Assembly. Here rose a quick enough debate. Goodwin, Nye, and their party, by all means pressing the neglect, contempt, and suppressing all such fantastic papers: others were as vehement for the taking notice of them, that the parliament might be acquaint therewith, to see to the remedy of those dangerous sects. The matter was left to be considered, as the committees should think fit; but many marvelled at Goodwin and Nye's vehemency in that matter."† Lightfoot's account is substantially to the same effect. "I was sent for out," he writes, "by a man recommended to me by Mr.

* Lightfoot's Journal, Works, vol. xiii. pp. 52, 92.

† Letter 41, quoted in Hanbury, ii. 255.

Spencer, who brought a bundle of books, or rather copies of one book, directed to the assembly from Amsterdam, from one of the Separation, in which he pleadeth, that we are bound in conscience to tolerate all sects. I got Mr. Byfield to come to look upon them, and Mr. Seaman, and Dr. Burgess, and we put the books into Mr. Byfield's hands, and enjoined the man to come to-morrow, and he shall know the mind of the assembly. . . After this, the business from Amsterdam was called to be read; and it was very much opposed by the Independent party; and it cost a great deal of agitation and a little hot; and after all it was not read."*

This happened on the 29th of December, 1643; and it seems undeniable that up to this time at least, the assembly Independents were a long way behind many of their party, and by no means favourable to liberty of conscience, properly so called. Other views, however, have been entertained on this subject, and published with a degree of enthusiasm fully warranted, if those views are correct.

It is asserted that in 1644, in the debate on the divine right of presbyterianism, Philip Nye advocated the principle of unlimited toleration, in the following words: "By the command of God, the magistrate is discharged to put the least discourtesy on any man, Turk, Jew, Papist, or Socinian, or any religion whatever, for his religious belief;" that the noble sentiment thus expressed was the great principle of the Independents of the assembly, and became their rallying point, as well as that of the Erastians, from that period. Baillie is referred to in confirmation of this opinion, and his letters are quoted as conveying a

* Lightfoot's Journal, Works. xiii. 93.

lively representation of the confusion and contention which such an avowal produced.* It is our duty to show that this statement is without historical foundation.

It is true, a remarkable scene was to be witnessed in the Jerusalem chamber, on the 21st of February, 1644, of which Baillie—the Boswell of the presbyterian party—has given a graphic account. It is true also that Philip Nye, acting in the name of the Independents, was the occasion of that scene. It is not true, however, that the cause of provocation was the assertion of the principle of unlimited toleration; but something else, of an altogether different nature. To explain this matter fully, we must go back a little to the earlier stages of the debate.†

On the 9th of the previous January, the third committee‡ reported the subject of ordination for discussion under five heads:—"1. What ordination is. 2. Whether necessarily to be continued. 3. Who to ordain. 4. What persons to be ordained, and how qualified. 5. The manner how." The first and second points were soon despatched. The third, however, occasioned much debate. The presbyterians wanted

* Liberty of Conscience Illustrated. By J. W. Massie, D.D. pp 112, 113, &c.

† Lightfoot, Works, vol. xiii., compared with Baillie. Lightfoot has been strangely overlooked, or very carelessly read by most writers on this period. He is more valuable than Baillie on questions like the present, because he records with great precision every day's discussion in the assembly. Baillie gives only a general statement, sometimes without regard to chronological order; so that the date of his letters is not always a certain guide as to the date of the occurrences he describes. See also Hanbury, iii. 6—31.

‡ For the orderly despatch of business, three committees had been early appointed, to prepare the subjects for discussion.

the answer to be, "The preaching presbyters only to ordain." To this the Independents refused assent, and obtained a committee to state their views on the whole question of ordination. On the 19th, Philip Nye reported from this committee to the following effect:—"1. Ordination, for the substance of it, is the solemnization of an officer's outward call, in which the elders of the church, in the name of Christ, and for the church, do, by a visible sign, design the person, and ratify his separation to his office; with prayer for, and blessing upon, his gifts in the ministration thereof. 2. That the power that gives the formal being to an officer should be derived by Christ's institution from the power that is in elders, as such, on the act of ordination,—as yet we find not any where held forth in the word." While this was being discussed, the Earl of Manchester brought an order from the Lords for despatching the business of ordination, in order that certain of the London ministers might be authorized to ordain ministers for the City. On this, the assembly turned aside from the consideration of the objections of the Independents, and endeavoured to make out an extraordinary case of necessity for empowering the London ministers to do as was desired. The Independents resisted this attempt to prejudge the whole question, and with great ability kept up a continual fire of argumentation for many days. "Either," said Bridge, "the ministers of London are a presbytery or no; if they be, then we are to treat of the presbytery; if not, then to debate whether ministers out of a presbytery may ordain." "We conceive," said Nye, in the name of his brethren, "it doth really and *de facto* set up the presbytery before discussed." By this time the grand committee had

sent in for discussion the question of presbytery itself; and after some debate, in which Lord Saye prevailed on behalf of his party, the case of necessity was set aside until this last question had been decided. Thus the Independents prevented for a season the institution of a London presbytery. In accordance with this decision, the question of presbytery came under discussion on the 5th of February,* in the following terms:—"Divers churches may be under one presbyterial government." Goodwin led on the argument against the proposition, in the name of the Independent committee, which appears to have become a standing one for their party. A long debate ensued. On the 15th, however, their arguments were negatived, and the proposition was about to be discussed in the affirmative, when Bridge proposed another argument against the proposition from Matt. xviii. 15—17. "Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault, between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, then hast thou gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."

The consideration of this argument occupied the assembly many days. Bridge contended that this passage gave every particular congregation, consisting of elders and brethren, entire and full power of jurisdiction within themselves, without power of appeal to any other; and in meeting the objection that an

* Stoughton says April, through following the date of Baillie's letter, instead of Lightfoot's more specific Journal.

offending church should be liable to censure as well as a private person, answered as follows: "1. This is to set a power over a power. 2. This makes as heavy against presbytery; for a presbytery may offend: and so it may rise to a general council to be punished." A deeply interesting discussion ensued, in which Marshall, Vines, Calamy, Goodwin, Rutherford, Selden, and Herle, were the principal speakers.* On the 20th, Philip Nye stood up and made a long speech, the purport of which is given by Baillie, and the topics of which are formally noted in Lightfoot's Journal.

* It may here be mentioned, that Calamy did not agree with the Independents; and that Selden in a long and learned argument, contended that by "the church," was meant the Sanhedrim. Burroughes did not speak at all, until Feb. 22nd, or if he did, there is no record to that effect. The speech which the author of "Liberty of Conscience Illustrated," has put in his mouth just before Nye divided the assembly, was delivered on March 9th, 1646, or more than two years later. Nor is this the only anachronism in that otherwise able lecture. For example, Baxter, Owen, Milton, and Cromwell, are represented as being probably present in the assembly on the day of Nye's declaration. There is no record of Baxter's being in London so early as this. At this time he was in Coventry. Owen, so far from "feeling interested in promoting Independency," was not an Independent till 1645. Milton would have disdained to be present. He had been cited before the Lords for his book on Divorce, at the instigation of the assembly; and one of their number, Mr. Herbert Palmer, had publicly preached against him. Cromwell was in parliament "transiently" on the 22nd of January, but at this time was fighting away in Buckinghamshire, and taking ammunition to Gloucester. The reason assigned for the probability of his being present, is singularly inaccurate. "Just at this time," says Dr. Massie, "the self-denying ordinance was in process of administration. Numbers of the leaders of the army were therefore in London, Oliver Cromwell among the rest." The self-denying ordinance was not proposed till the 9th of the following December, and was not passed till April 3rd, 1645.

After following up the argument advanced by Bridge, he proceeded to show "the inconsistence of presbytery with a civil state." According to Baillie, "he was cried down as impertinent;" and according to Lightfoot, "he was taken off as speaking nothing to the question, but he would not be taken off, and would not be convinced that he was besides order; whereupon there was some heat, and it was called to try it by vote; but the Lord Saye and others gainsaid it,—so that it was declined: and so we adjourned."

Thus ended the discussion of that day. Nye, however, was not to be silenced. The next day, after Gillespie, Young, Selden, and Coleman had spoken, he rose up at the time when the assembly was crowded by strangers, peers and commoners, and repeated his argument with renewed earnestness and amplification. "The ordering of the church by Christ," he observed, "is such as may be without jealousy and suspicion. But power over power in the church, after the presbyterian plan, extends itself by degrees, so at last to be equal with the civil. It is inconvenient to nourish such a vast body in a commonwealth: it is not to be endured. Especially so when such a power, as in a national synod, becomes as great as the civil, and yet has to do with spiritual matters, and bears immediately on the conscience. Then look abroad at the present state of this country! Nothing troubles men more than to think whether the presbytery shall be set up *jure divino;* and no wonder, for if it be, it will grow so as to become as big as the civil power. When two vast bodies are of equal amplitude, if they disagree it is nought; and if they agree it will be worse."*

* Lightfoot, Works xiii. pp. 108, 109, slightly altered, in order to make his notes read like a speech.

The temper of the presbyterians was sorely tried by this line of reasoning, and after a few more words broke out. "Here," says Lightfoot, "he read something out of Mr. Rutherford's preface upon his assertion of the Scotch government, and would have fetched something out of it: when it was sharply prohibited, and he cried out of as disorderly and dangerous; and Mr. Henderson cried out that he spoke like Sanballet, Tobiah, or Symmachus; and Mr. Sedgwick wished that he might be excluded out of the assembly: and here was a great heat, and it was put to the question, and voted that he had spoken against order."*

Such was the actual scene in the assembly. Baillie's account is to the same effect.† The question of toleration was not introduced into the argument. Nye's great offence consisted in contending that presbyterianism, legitimately carried out, would create a synodical power whose jurisdiction would be co-ordinate with, and detrimental to, that of the civil power. The same line of reasoning is advanced with great power afterwards, by Nye and the other "dissenting brethren," in their "Reasons against certain propositions concerning presbyterial government," printed in 1648.‡

* Ib. Also, Assembly's Answer to the Independents' Reasons, &c.

† In his letter to Spang, dated April 2nd, 1644, or more than a month after the event. "The day following," he writes, "when he saw the assembly full of the prime nobles and chief members of both houses, he did fall on that argument again, and very boldly offered to demonstrate that *our way of drawing a whole kingdom under one national assembly is formidable, yea, thrice over pernicious to civil states and kingdoms.* All cried him down, and some would have had him expelled the assembly as seditious," &c.

‡ See Hanbury ii. pp. 491, 493, 498, 501—504, 508, 509. Nowhere is there a more masterly argument against an established presbyterianism, on civil grounds, than that which is to be found in the pages noted above.

But, it may be asked, does not Baillie attribute the famous sentence given a few pages back to Philip Nye? On the contrary, he expressly affirms that Nye and his brethren did *not* hold the sentiment expressed by it. The following is the passage in which the affirmation occurs:* "The Independents here, finding they have not the magistrates so obsequious as in New England, turn *their pens as you will see in M.S.*, to take from the magistrate all power of taking any coercive order with the vilest heretics. Not only they praise your magistrate, who for policy gives some secret tolerance to divers religions,—wherein, as I conceive, your divines preach against them as great sinners,—but avow that, by God's command, the magistrate is discharged to put the least discourtesy on any man, Jew, Turk, Papist, Socinian, or whatever, for his religion! I wish Apollonius considered this well. *The five he writes to will not say this*; but M.S. is of as great authority as any of them."

It is plain, then, that "the five," of whom Nye was one, did *not* hold the sentiment under consideration. Baillie was anxious that Apollonius,† who had engaged to write against "the five," should also write against

* In a letter to his cousin Spang, then at Campvere, in Holland, dated May 17th, 1644, more than a month after the letter in which the scene in the assembly is described, and nearly two months after the scene itself.

† Apollonius was a presbyterian minister at Middleburgh. He moved the "Wallachrian classes," or presbytery, to write to the assembly against the "Apologetical Narration." The publication was entitled, "Consideratio Quarundam Controversiarum, &c." or "A Consideration of certain Controversies at this time agitated in the Kingdom of England, &c. 1644." John Norton, of Ipswich, in New England, replied to Apollonius in his "Responsio ad totam Quæstionum Syllogen," &c. Fuller, in his Church History, speaks in high terms of Norton's work.

those Independents who had become the avowed advocates of unlimited toleration. These were not members of the assembly, but men of great eminence and growing influence, respecting whom Baillie gives the following particulars. "M.S. against A. S.," he writes, "is John Goodwin of Coleman Street. He is a bitter enemy to presbytery, and is openly for a full liberty of conscience to all sects, even Jews, Turks, Papists, and all, to be more openly tolerate than with you. This way is very pleasant to many here. . . . . That faction increases mightily in number, hopes, and pride. But if it please God to give us good news from York, we will tell them more of our mind."*

Having defined the actual position of the Independents of the assembly, a reference may now be made to the illustrious person whose name occurs in this extract, and to some others rising into note at this period ; from which it will become more and more apparent that, while the Independents within the assembly contended against the establishment of presbyterianism, with great ability, but on narrow grounds, the Independents without were the great pioneers in the cause of perfect religious liberty, and the means of urging their more honored, but, in this respect, less enlightened brethren forward to the advocacy of rights which they might not otherwise have known.

John Goodwin was born in Norfolk, in 1593, and educated at Cambridge, where he took his degree as master of arts, and was elected a fellow of Queen's

* Baillie's letter to Spang, May 10th, 1644. By "good news from York," he means news of the success of the Scotch army. "Honest Baillie!" A. S. was Adam Steuart. He published in 1644 "An Answer" to the "Apologetical Narration."

college, in November, 1617. On leaving the University, he appears to have preached occasionally in various parts of the kingdom; but without settling down over any charge until 1632, when he became vicar of Coleman-street, London, by the appointment of the parishioners. The ensuing eight years of his life were spent in the faithful discharge of his ministerial duties, and in the cultivation of his gifted and well-furnished mind. He became a hard student, a profound theologian and politician, and an attentive observer of the eventful and mysterious times in which his lot was cast. With deep sympathy he had watched the growth of puritan principles under circumstances of severe trial; and with ever increasing indignation had marked the advancement of tyranny, step by step, to its culminating horrors under the auspices of Strafford and Laud. When the civil war broke out, he at once took the side of the parliament against Charles and his court. He both preached and wrote in furtherance of its measures. His voice never faltered, his courage never failed him, amidst the varying fortunes of the war. Convinced of the justice of the cause he had espoused, he pursued its aims even to the last extremity; and when a series of military successes had brought the hereditary despot under the power of the people, his voice was heard the loudest, amidst the uproar of contending parties, for simple justice upon the crowned but vanquished delinquent. His peculiar views on some points of christian doctrine led to an estrangement between him and the congregational ministers of his day, as well as to a prejudiced estimate of his character at a later period, down to the present time; but none have ever doubted his ear-

nestness. He was one of the boldest and most eloquent asserters of liberty of conscience, and few, if any, of his contemporaries were a match for him, in any of the many controversies in which he engaged.*

The sincerity of Goodwin in avowing himself an Independent, has been called in question by some writers, in consequence of certain expressions reported to have been uttered by him.† The report, however, rests on a very narrow foundation, and is scarcely worthy of notice, in opposition to the unimpeachable testimony of his life. Neither should Goodwin's humourbe overlooked in a question of this nature. He was a perfect master of irony, and no doubt was often misunderstood by his more obtuse contemporaries, as well as by later readers. It should also be remembered, that although a Congregational Independent, he was something more. He would have separated altogether and for ever between church and state, while the more honored Independents of the assembly retained the theory and practice of a limited union. This circumstance in some measure prejudiced them against him, and at the same time led him to speak of himself as having little sympathy with them. Hence, when he found them rising in influence and power through the turn of affairs, he

* The theological views of Goodwin do not come under notice in this work, which relates to polity, not doctrines. But no one versed in the subject can doubt that, Arminian though he was, his writings have thrown great light on the most momentous of all topics. If he erred respecting free-will, he furnished succeeding theological writers with their most efficient arguments against antinomianism, and in defence of the doctrine of universal atonement, in his "Redemption Redeemed."

† Edward's Gangræna, pp. 25, 26. Hanbury, iii. 177.

could write with perfect truth,—"My interest with these men, though it was never much considerable, yet was it much more whilst they were the tail, and the single presbyterian faction the head, than it hath been since the turning of the wheel."*

The fullest and fairest account respecting his opinions and aims is afforded in the following remarkable passage, which exhibits his peculiar humour and catholicity of spirit, in a most felicitous manner.†

"I know I am looked upon, by reason partly of my writings, partly of my practice, as a man very deeply engaged for the Independent's cause against presbytery. But the truth is, I am neither so whole for the former, nor yet against the latter, as I am, I believe, generally voted in the thoughts of men to be. For, to express myself with allusion to that of the apostle (Rom. vii. 25.), it is in my spirit or 'mind' only, that I 'serve the law' of Independency; but in my 'flesh' I serve the law of presbytery. And if the cause of presbytery could be so pleaded and cleared, by any or all her patrons, as to legitimate her birth and pedigree, in my judgment and conscience, I profess, in the presence of the glorious God, who is ready to judge me, that it would be as a year of Jubilee, yea, as a resurrection from death unto life, unto my flesh; yea, my spirit, for my flesh's sake, would rejoice also that gain and godliness, the world and Christ, were so well agreed! And if I apprehended nothing more, or more desirable, in the way of 'Independency' so called, than matter of accommodation for the outward man, I would presently cut all the cords of engagements by which I am any ways bound to her, and let

* The Obstructers of Justice, &c., p. 102.

† Anapologesiastes Antapologias. Preface.

myself and mine drive upon the providence of God for our maintenance and support in the world: so prepared am I to take the impression of any rational argument or plea, either for presbytery or against Independency, without prejudice. And, if I had liberty in my conscience to pass into the tents of the one, the tabernacles of the other should no longer be my habitation; yea, if I could meet with anything that had but strength or colour enough to stumble me, or make me doubt of my way, I would interdict my pen from dealing further in the controversy, and stand still upon the watch-tower of enquiry, until God shall clearly show me the way wherein he would have me go. Some things I have written in favour of the congregational way, and some things against presbytery; but I may truly and with a clear conscience in the sight of God say, that as well in the one as the other, my great and principal desire and end was, according to my covenant, the glory of God in bringing 'the churches of God,' that is, the saints or servants of God who are materially his 'churches in the three kingdoms,' to the nearest conjunction and uniformity in religion and form of church government; being fully assured, that if ever the generality of the people of God in these kingdoms be conjoined in either, it must be in the truth—not in error!

"And therefore, being fully persuaded, resolved, and possest in my judgment, soul, and conscience, that the way of the congregation is the truth, I conceived a possibility at least, yea, and some degrees of a probability, that 'the churches of God in the three kingdoms,' in the sense declared, might be drawn into a near 'conjunction' in this, namely, when the beauty

and truth of it should be fully manifested and made known unto them; but had no hope of procuring any such 'conjunction' of them in the other, and therefore endeavoured the dissolution of the engagements of those to it who were or might be entangled by a clear discovery of the insufficiency and inconsistency of it with the truth, that so they might be the better prepared for union and conjunction with those of the congregational way. As for those who, by 'the churches of God in the three kingdoms,' understand all the inhabitants of these 'kingdoms,' good and bad, sons of God, and sons of Belial, etc.; one with another; and 'swear unto the Most High God with their hands lifted up,' that 'they will endeavour to bring these into the nearest conjunction in religion and form of church government;' what do they in effect, but swear in that most sacred and tremendous manner, that they will 'endeavour' to bring day and night light and darkness, righteousness and unrighteousness, Christ and Belial into the nearest communication and conjunction they can."

Such were the real aims of John Goodwin. Calumniated though he was, his writings were the means of enlightening many who would otherwise have been acquainted with only one side of the system of Independency; while by his "Plea for Liberty of Conscience," and his "Theomachia; or the grand imprudence of fighting against God,"—both published in 1644,—he prepared the public mind for rejecting the pretensions of the presbyterians, and assisted in the general cause of civil as well as religious liberty.

Roger Williams, another courageous and eloquent expounder of the rights of conscience, was in England

at this time, and must not be passed over without notice. The story of his life is replete with engaging incidents, and worthy of a place amongst the records of the most enlightened benefactors of that age.

He was born in Wales in 1600. Although of humble parentage, he was sent at an early age to Oxford, by Sir Edward Coke, who discovered by a kind of happy accident his precocious genius. His classical attainments were of a high order for that day, and his knowledge of the law, to the practice of which it seems more than probable that his patron had destined him, was of great service in some of the most memorable portions of his career. His predilections were for the ministry, rather than the bar; and on leaving college, he was ordained, and settled over a parish. But from his childhood, as he informs us, he had learned to regard religion as a matter pertaining to the conscience and the heart. He therefore soon joined the puritans, and became conspicuous for his opposition to the formalism and fetters of the established church. Finding no liberty in England, he emigrated to Boston in 1630, and sought to join the congregational Independents in that place. But his peculiar views respecting communion not being reciprocated, he determined to proceed to Salem, and accepted the pastorate of the congregational church in that town. He had already, however, given offence by his decided opinions respecting the jurisdiction of the magistrate in religious matters. Even thus early, and probably before he left England, he had arrived at those convictions respecting the essential distinction between things civil and spiritual, which occassioned him so much trouble and persecution in his after life. Immediately after landing at Boston, he

had declared his opinion, that the magistrate might not take cognizance of any offences against "the first table." Such an opinion was utterly at variance with the spirit of the New England legislation. The magistrate was regarded from the first settling of the country as "the keeper of both tables," and although nothing hierarchial existed in the colony, religion was incorporated with the foundation of the civil polity. A law was enacted, on the very day on which Williams sought the freedom of the colony, to the effect that no man should be admitted to the freedom of the state, who was not the member of some existing church. On this, Williams left Salem for Plymouth, where he devoted himself to ministerial duties for two years, not however without offending many of the earlier colonists by the avowal of his principles. From this time, a succession of troubles awaited him. The church at Salem again invited him to become their teacher, and, in spite of the opposition of magistrates and ministers, inducted him into his office. But measures of a persecuting character were adopted. He was summoned to appear before the Colonial Court at Boston, to answer various charges, some civil and some ecclesiastical, brought against him by his enemies; and at length, in November 1635, he was sentenced to banishment.*

Before this time, Williams had cherished the idea of forming a new settlement, where complete liberty might be enjoyed. He now began to communicate

* Knowles' Life of Roger Williams, pp. 71, 72. Backus' History of Baptists in New England, i. 69, 70. See Underhill's Biographical Introduction to "the Bloudy Tenent of Persecution," for a fair account of the whole persecution.

his views to his adherents, who reckoned a considerable number. The court hearing of the project, determined to remove him by ship to England, and ordered a pinnace to be sent to fetch him from Boston. Williams, however, escaped from his persecutors, with such moneys as he could raise by mortgage upon his property; directed his course through the forests, rivers, wastes, and wilds,—all alone, and exposed to all the severities of a hard winter; and after fourteen weeks' wanderings and voyaging, arrived at Sekonk, on the east bank of the Pawtucket. Here it was his purpose to build, cultivate the soil, and lay the foundation of a new settlement. He requited the hospitality of the Indians by benevolent and zealous efforts for their welfare, became their instructer and civilizer, and was the first to convey to them the lessons of Christianity. But he had not resided there many months, before a message reached him from the governor of Plymouth, that he was within the bounds of the colony. He immediately determined to leave. Entering his canoe with five companions, they descended the river; and at length reaching a place at the mouth of the Mohassuck where a fresh spring welcomed their approach, they landed, and commenced the noble task of rearing a new colony. This spot was afterwards named Providence, and became the capital of Rhode Island—the first colony in the world in which perfect liberty of conscience was the acknowledged basis of the civil polity. It became celebrated as the very home of freedom, and its population rapidly increased by the accessions of "the poor and persecuted" of all religions who fled to it for shelter.

The settlement of Rhode Island was effected in

1638. Up to this time, Williams was an Independent and a pædo-baptist.* His views respecting liberty of conscience had been already formed. No change of opinion respecting infant baptism could affect those views. His notions of liberty and indefeasible right were not determined by the meaning of a rite, or the appropriateness of a ceremonial. He had a soul above all such littleness. In 1639, he adopted baptist views, and became the founder and pastor of the first baptist church in America.† A few months later he doubted the propriety of the whole proceeding, resigned his pastorate, and became unsettled in his views respecting the ministry and ordinances of the church of Christ. Still, he retained his former Independent principles, in all their threefold integrity; and when he came to England in 1643, was in all probability the means of winning over to the side of truth and justice some influential parties, who till that period were Congregational Independents only.

* Modern baptist writers should remember this, when they claim Williams as one of their sect. Mr. Underhill states the fact, but would avoid the inference. Hence his statement, in p. 26 of the Biographical Introduction, about "infant baptism and persecution." Surely, in Williams' case there was no "sisterly embrace" between those two things! We can understand how it is possible for pædobaptists to persecute anti-pædobaptists, and for anti-pædobaptists to persecute pædobaptists; but how either infant baptism or adult baptism, sprinkling or immersion, should be essentially connected with persecution, we cannot discover.

† This church was formed in the same way as that of Mr. Smith, at Amsterdam. See back, vol. ii. p. 291. A Mr. Holliman, an unbaptized person, first baptized Mr. Williams, then Mr. Williams baptized Mr. Holliman, and so on.

His mission to England was of a special nature. He was sent by the colonists to obtain a charter for Rhode Island. At an earlier period, he would have found some difficulty in obtaining it. It had been a project of Laud's, to bring all the colonial settlements in New England under prelatical rule, and Charles would have favoured his scheme, if the opportunity had offered of carrying it into effect. When Williams arrived in London, he found Charles at war with his subjects, Laud a prisoner, and the old established hierarchy superseded by the assembly at Westminster. He could not have come at a more opportune crisis. The government at home was in an unsettled state, and had by no means determined, as yet, what shape the charter of British liberties should assume. It was not likely therefore to be very fastidious in its examination of the charter which Williams solicited on behalf of "Providence Plantations in the Narragansett Bay." On March 14th, 1644, the charter was granted, giving the colonists full power to adopt whatever form of government they preferred. The form of government ultimately adopted, was democratic, and the following words concluded the document in which the general assembly of the colony drew up their admirable code: "And otherwise than thus, what is herein forbidden, all men may walk as their consciences persuade them, every one in the name of his God. And let the saints of the Most High walk in this colony without molestation, in the name of Jehovah their God, for ever and ever." These memorable proceedings are attributable to Roger Williams. The work, of which the pilgrim fathers had laid the foundation, was perfected by one whom they had driven into exile; and the most flou-

rishing republic the world has ever seen owes much of its present grandeur, and will be indebted for its future stability, to those great and abiding principles, which the founder of Rhode Island was the first to embody in a written code of laws.*

Williams contributed in many ways to the cause of religious liberty during the few months of his sojourn in London. He arrived shortly after the Westminster Assembly had met in 1643, and remained until the summer of the following year. His mission brought him into contact with some of the chief members of parliament, and with the leaders of the Independent party. Colonial affairs were managed at that time by a board of commissioners, at the head of which was Lord Warwick. Every facility was afforded him in prosecuting his object; especially by Sir Harry Vane, with whom he formed an intimate friendship. The change which took place in the opinions of that eminent member of the House of Commons and of the Assembly may in some measure be accounted for from this circumstance. Up to this period Vane had been a Congregational Independent only, and had co-operated with the Assembly in many of its intolerant proceedings; but from the time of his intercourse with Williams, he became an openly avowed advocate of unlimited toleration.

Besides this, Williams wrote an exposition of his views in opposition to Cotton and the New England Congregationalists, and published it in 1644, under the title of "The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution for Cause of Conscience discussed, in a Conference between Truth and Peace." This work, dedicated to "the High

* The "Bloudy Tenent," etc.: Biographical Introduction. Reprinted by the Hanserd Knollys Society. 1848.

Court of Parliament," is replete with the results of prolonged thought and inquiry, and, notwithstanding the haste with which it was composed, is to the present time one of the ablest works ever given to the world on the momentous subject of which it treats. It was read with great eagerness by many in that day, and tended very much, by the convictions it produced, to strengthen the hands of the friends of liberty.

The influence of these men—Goodwin and Williams—was very great. They formed and represented the opinions of many both in London and the provinces. Many churches, similar to the one in Southwark over which Stephen More presided, were gathered in the metropolis and other parts of England. Their pastors were, for the most part, thorough Independents. Differing from one another on minor points, as on the subject of baptism or predestination, they were agreed in regarding religion as a matter between God and the soul, with which magistracy and human law had no concern. In 1643 and 1644, several of the baptist churches in London published a Confession of Faith, expressing these views; in which many other churches in the country sympathised. The church at Stepney, of which Henry Burton became the pastor, was formed at this time, and continues to the present day. But the great majority of the churches which originated at this period had only an ephemeral being. In the strife, confusion, and persecutions of later periods, they were scattered; and it is only from the general statements of contemporary writers that their existence can be ascertained. The names of their ministers have also perished. Only a few of the more prominent survive in the records of the period. To those already mentioned, may be

added the names of Jesse, Spilsbury, Saltmarsh, Richardson, Hanserd Knollys, John Simpson, and William Bartlet, men of character and principle, all of whom held, more or less nearly, the opinions of Goodwin and Williams respecting the rights of conscience.

It would appear that the discussions of this period led some of the persons whose opinions have already been adverted to, to review their position with advantage. Burton, for example, became more decided respecting the question of state interference with religion. It so happened that the three martyrs of the pillory became divided in sentiment; Bastwick and Prynne siding with the presbyterians, and Burton pressing boldly on to right and scriptural grounds. A warm controversy sprang up between the three; first between Burton and Prynne in 1644, and in the following year between Burton and Bastwick.* The production of the lawyer is characterized by his usual ability and learning, not without a considerable spice of bitterness; that of the physician by a ludicrously rabid enmity to the Independents; while Burton's replies are replete with comprehensive and scriptural views respecting the duty of the state at that crisis, and are pervaded by a spirit of great Christian forbearance.† His "Vindication of the Churches com-

* Prynne's work is entitled, "Twelve Considerable Serious Questions, Touching Church Government: &c." Bastwick's is "Independency not God's Ordinance: &c.," afterwards enlarged and published as "The Utter Routing of the whole Army of all the Independents and Sectaries, &c." 1646. See copious extracts from all these in Hanbury, vols. ii. and iii.

† Burton's reply to Prynne is entitled, "A Vindication of Churches commonly called Independent: &c." 1644. His reply to Bastwick is "Vindiciæ Veritatis: Truth vindicated against

monly called Independent" is a triumphant exposition of the rights of congregations to choose their own ministers and manage their own religious affairs according to scriptural precedent; and, collaterally, of the profanity of attempting to establish national churches, of whatever name or polity. The following may serve as a specimen of his reasoning on this subject:

"This House of God, wherein Christ rules as King, stands upon so many principles, as so many main pillars, not to be shaken: as, 1. It is a spiritual house, whose only builder and governor is Christ, and not man. 2. It is a spiritual kingdom, whose only king is Christ, and not man. 3. It is a spiritual republic, whose only lawgiver is Christ, and not man. 4. It is a spiritual corporation, or body, whose only head is Christ, and not man. 5. It is a communion of saints, governed by Christ's Spirit, not man's. 6. Christ's Church is a congregation called and gathered out of the world, by Christ's Spirit and word, and not by man! . . . And out of these principles do issue these conclusions: 1. That no man is the builder of this spiritual house. 2. That no man nor power, on earth, hath a kingly power over this kingdom. 3. That no earthly lawgivers may give laws for the government of this republic. 4. That no man may claim or exercise a headship over this body. 5. That no man can or ought to undertake the government of this communion of saints."*

The chief point on which Burton seems to err, respects the conceding to magistrates a power to pro-

Calumny, &c." 1645." In the same year both Hanserd Knollys and John Saltmarsh replied to Bastwick's book.

* Hanbury, ii. 407.

vide for the maintenance of ministers amongst a heathen or unconverted people, where no churches exist. Here, however, he errs with Richardson and many of the baptists of that day, as well as with Cromwell up to a much later period.* Excepting on this subject, Burton's views appear to be correct, and much in advance of many congregationalists of his time. Neither would he defer to the judgment of the assembly of divines in matters pertaining to doctrine and polity. "If we can find out the mind of Christ," he exclaims, "by his immediate voice, we dare not suspend our practice of it until we have it at the second-hand from men." His decided and manly opinion on this point incensed the assembly, who had passed a resolution that the affairs of Christ's kingdom should stand still until they had concluded their deliberations. The presbyterian portion of the assembly, in particular, did all in their power to injure him. In the following year they procured his ejectment from the church and pulpit in Friday-street, at the same time that John Goodwin, from similar motives, was deposed from his place in Coleman-street.†

The name of Milton, although already adverted to, deserves special mention, as one of those who exercised great influence over public opinion, while his own views respecting liberty, both civil and religious, were in progress. He was no Erastian.

* See Tracts on Liberty of Conscience, p. 243.

† It seems probable that at this time, or in 1645, Burton became the chosen pastor of the Independent church at Stepney; though he may have been present at its formation in the preceding year, and have frequently preached and presided at the Lord's table before he was ejected from Friday-street.

In his earlier publications he appears to have approved of a certain kind of presbyterian polity, yet with reservations and limitations which would have rendered it more like the association of churches amongst the congregationalists, than the synodical system of the presbyterians of his day. He would have ministers appointed by the churches, and not by any ecclesiastical authority; or, as he expresses it, "by God and the congregation." He regarded church discipline and censure as an important means of establishing the faithful and purifying the church; but would have it to extend no further than to a "fatherly admonishment and christian rebuke, by all the dear and sweet promises of salvation, and by all the threatenings and thunders of the law and rejected gospel." He was especially vehement against those who would inflict civil pains and penalties for supposed religious errors, and represents in glowing language the indignation of the true church against those who had converted it into "a banking den of thieves," by means of fines imposed on the disobedient, thus buying and selling "the awful wrinkles of her majestic brow." He considered all pastors coming to their office by "full and free election of God's people," as "a holy and equal aristocracy;" yet an aristocracy only by their actual virtues and calling, not with any superior privileges, much less with ecclesiastical jurisdiction,—which, he says, "in the church there ought to be none at all," and is "nothing else but a pure tyrannical forgery of the prelates." He held that the magistrate, or civil ruler, had no rightful concern with the religion of the people, who in other matters were amenable to him. "The magistrate," he says, "hath only to deal with the outward

part, I mean not of the body alone, but of the mind in all her outward acts, which in scripture is called the outward man. I say as a magistrate, for what he doth further, he doth it as a member of the church. His general end is the outward peace and welfare of the commonwealth, and civil happiness in this life." For the "inner man," God had provided another kind of instrumentality in the church itself—its officers and discipline. "In the gospel," he says, "which is the straightest and the dearest covenant can be made between God and man, we being now his adopted sons, and nothing fitter for us to think on than to be like him, united to him, and, as he pleases to express it, to have fellowship with him; it is all necessity that we should expect this blessed efficacy of healing our inward man to be ministered to us in a more familiar and effectual method than ever before. God being now no more a judge after the sentence of the law, nor, as it were, a schoolmaster of perishable rites, but a most indulgent father, governing his church as a family of sons in their discreet age: and therefore, in the sweetest and mildest manner of paternal discipline, he hath committed his other office of preserving in healthful constitution the inner man, which may be termed the spirit of the soul, to his spiritual deputy the minister of each congregation." At the same time, he agreed with the presbyterians, and most of the congregationalists, in regarding an eldership distinct from the ministry as an essential part of the primitive polity; while he would have all the members of churches, "in select numbers and courses," to partake in "the holy duties of discipline by their serviceable and solemn presence." In one passage of great beauty and eloquence, he contends

that the functions of government in the church should be "free and open to any christian man, though never so laic, if his capacity, his faith, and prudent demeanour, commend him." On this subject, he exclaims, "when every good christian, thoroughly acquainted with all those glorious privileges of sanctification and adoption, which render him more sacred than any dedicated altar or element, shall be restored to his right in the church, and not excluded from such place of spiritual government, as his christian abilities, and his approved good life in the eye and testimony of the church shall prefer him to, this and nothing sooner will open his eyes to a wise and true valuation of himself, (which is so requisite and high a point of Christianity,) and will stir him up to walk worthy the honourable and grave employment wherewith God and the church hath dignified him; not fearing lest he should meet with some outward holy thing in religion, which his lay-touch or presence might profane; but lest something unholy from within his own heart should dishonour and profane in himself that priestly unction and clergy-right whereto Christ hath entitled him. Then would the congregation of the Lord soon recover the true likeness and visage of what she is indeed, a holy generation, a royal priesthood, a saintly communion, the household and city of God."

The opinions expressed above are entitled to consideration, not merely because they are those of one of the greatest of men, but because they are the opinions of an eminent Christian, whose life was unsullied by a stain, and whose bent of mind and course of reading fitted him to form and ex-

press opinions on subjects of an ecclesiastical and theological nature. Indeed, he had been destined, as he informs us, both by his parents and his own resolution, for the service of the church, and would in all probability have entered upon it, had he not on arriving at maturity become sensible of the tyranny which "had invaded" it; that "he who would take orders must subscribe slave, and take an oath withal, which, unless he took with a conscience that would retch, he must either straight perjure, or split his faith."

It should be observed, however, that the writings from which these opinions are gathered, were all published by Milton before 1644,* and that instead of receding in the liberality and spirituality of his views he was ever advancing and perfecting them from year to year. During the period now under consideration, he rendered a service not only to that, but to succeeding times, by his "Areopagitica," or "Speech for the Liberty of unlicensed Printing," dedicated to the parliament, and occasioned by the attempts of the presbyterians to restore the practice of "licensing," which had been abolished with the Star Chamber.† It is a work of undying fame. Although written in English, it has obtained European celebrity, and is the store-house from which all succeeding advocates of the liberty of the press have drawn their reasonings.‡ As a composition it is unrivalled in the literature of any age

* Chiefly from "Reformation in England," "The Reason of Church Government urged against Prelaty," and "An Apology for Smectymnuus."

† The Areopagitica was published in November, 1644.

‡ See "Introductory Review," prefixed to Milton's Prose Works, by Robert Fletcher, p. xxii.

or country, for elegance and force, grace and fervour, wit and irony, consecutiveness of argument, splendor of imagery, vehemency of declamation, and persuasiveness of eloquence; while over the whole is shed a lustre for which there is no appropriate name,—that radiancy which emanates only from highest genius consecrated to the highest of all aims.

Although the specific subject of this work is limited, the course of argument comprehends the entire question of intellectual and spiritual freedom. Milton becomes the coadjutor of John Goodwin and Williams, and is identified with the advocates of liberty of conscience in their opposition to the pretensions of the presbyterians. His enmity to the Assembly is such as might have been expected from one who held his views, and his voice of warning already falls, but in vain, upon the ears of those who sought to stereotype the religious mind of England after the model ot Scotland. In one important respect he is in advance of the thinking men, both of his own and later times. We refer to his high views respecting the means by which the church of Christ is to be brought to unity, through a preliminary process of doctrinal differences and sectarian division consequent upon the superstition and tyranny of past times. To quote all that he has advanced upon this subject,—and the whole is worthy of the profoundest study of such as are seeking Christian union,—would occupy too much space. The following passages may serve, as a kind of stepping stones, to lead us through his general meaning.

"I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue unexercised, and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race,

where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat. Assuredly we bring not innocence into the world, we bring impurity much rather; that which purifies us is trial, and trial is by what is contrary."

"Many there be that complain of Divine Providence for suffering Adam to transgress. Foolish tongues! when God gave him reason, he gave him freedom to choose, for reason is but choosing; he had been else a mere artificial Adam, such an Adam as he is in the motions. We ourselves esteem not of that obedience, or love, or gift, which is of force; God therefore left him free, set before him a provoking object, ever almost in his eyes; herein consisted his merit, herein the right of his reward, the praise of his abstinence. Why should we affect a rigour contrary to the manner of God and of nature?"

"Were I the chooser, a dram of well-doing should be preferred before many times as much the forcible hinderance of evil-doing. For God sure esteems the growth and completing of one virtuous person, more than the restraint of ten vicious."

"If it come to inquisitioning again, and licensing, and that we are so timorous of ourselves, and suspicious of all men, as to fear each book, and the shaking of every leaf, before we know what the contents are; if some who but of late were little better than silenced from preaching, shall come now to silence us from reading, except what they please; it cannot be guessed what is intended by some but a second tyranny over learning, and will soon put it out of controversy, that bishops and presbyters are the same to us, both name and thing."

"Well knows he who uses to consider, that our

faith and knowledge thrives by exercise, as well as our limbs and complexion. Truth is compared in Scripture to a streaming fountain; if her waters flow not in a perpetual progression, they sicken into a muddy pool of conformity and tradition. A man may be a heretic in the truth; and if he believe things only because his pastor says so, or the Assembly so determines, without knowing other reason, though his belief be true, yet the very truth he holds becomes his heresy. There is not any burden, that some would gladlier post off to another, than the charge and care of their religion. There be, who knows not that there be of protestants and professors, who live and die in as errant and implicit faith, as any lay papist of Loretto."

"Truth indeed came once into the world with her divine master, and was a perfect shape most glorious to look on: but when he ascended, and his apostles after him were laid asleep, then straight arose a wicked race of deceivers, who,—as that story goes of the Egyptian Typhon with his conspirators, how they dealt with the good Osyris,—took the virgin Truth, hewed her lovely form into a thousand pieces, and scattered them to the four winds. From that time ever since, the sad friends of Truth, such as durst appear, imitating the careful search that Isis made for the mangled body of Osiris, went up and down gathering up limb by limb still as they could find them. We have not yet found them all, lords and commons, nor ever shall do, till her master's second coming; he shall bring together every joint and member, and shall mould them into an immortal feature of loveliness and perfection."

"There be who perpetually complain of schisms

and sects, and make it such a calamity that any man dissents from their maxims. It is their own pride and ignorance which causes the disturbing, who neither will hear with meekness, nor can convince, yet all must be suppressed which is not found in their syntagma. They are the troublers, they are the dividers of unity, who neglect and permit not others to unite those dissevered pieces, which are yet wanting to the body of truth. To be still searching what we know not, by what we know, still closing up truth to truth as we find it, (for all her body is homogeneal and proportional,) this is the golden rule in theology as well as in arithmetic, and makes up the best harmony in a church; not the forced and outward union, of cold, and neutral, and inwardly divided minds."

"Where there is much desire to learn, there of necessity will be much arguing, much writing, many opinions; for opinion in good men is but knowledge in the making. Under these fantastic terrours of sect and schism, we wrong the earnest and zealous thirst after knowledge and understanding, which God hath stirred up in this city. What some lament of, we rather should rejoice at, should rather praise their pious forwardness among men, to reassume the ill-deputed care of their religion into their own hands again. A little generous prudence, a little forbearance of one another, and some grain of charity, might win all these diligencies to join and unite into one general and brotherly search after truth; could we but forego this prelatical tradition of crowding free consciences and christian liberties into canons and precepts of men. I doubt not, if some great and worthy stranger should come among us,—wise to discern the mould and temper of a people, and how to govern

it, observing the high hopes and aims, the diligent alacrity of our extended thoughts and reasonings in the pursuance of truth and freedom,—but that he would cry out as Pyrrhus did, admiring the Roman docility and courage; if such were my Epirots, I would not despair the greatest design that could be attempted to make a church or kingdom happy. Yet these are the men cried out against for schismatics and sectaries, as if, while the temple of the Lord was building,—some cutting, some squaring the marble, others hewing the cedars, there should be a sort of irrational men, who could not consider there must be many schisms and many dissections made in the quarry and in the timber, ere the house of God can be built. And when every stone is laid artfully together, it cannot be united into a continuity, it can be but contiguous in this world: neither can every piece of the building be of one form; nay rather the perfection consists this, that out of many moderate varieties and brotherly dissimilitudes that are not vastly disproportional, arises the goodly and the graceful symmetry that commends the whole pile and structure. Let us therefore be more considerate builders, more wise in spiritual architecture, when great reformation is expected."

"Neither is God appointed and confined, where and out of what place these his chosen shall be first heard to speak; for he sees not as man sees, chooses not as man chooses, lest we should devote ourselves again to set places and assemblies, and outward callings of men; planting our faith one while in the old Convocation house, and another while in the chapel at Westminster; when all the faith and religion that shall be there canonized, is not sufficient without

plain convincement, and the charity of patient instruction, to supple the least bruise of conscience, to edify the meanest Christian, who desires to walk in the spirit, and not in the letter of human trust, for all the number of voices that can be there made; no, though Harry the Seventh himself there, with all his liege tombs about him, should lend their voices from the dead to swell their number." *

It would have been well for that and succeeding ages, if the noble sentiments embodied in these passages had been generally received. Freedom of thought and speech—a perfect tolerance of differing opinions—a charitable construction of the motives and aims even of those who may be considered in error—are essential preliminaries to all real agreement and union amongst the followers of truth. But bigotry too often prevails over justice and charity; and believers in the patient process by which the God of truth advances the spiritual interests of the human race, have always been comparatively few. The opinions of Milton and his coadjutors prevailed only to a limited extent, and have yet to be inculcated with a world-wide diffusiveness, before the prospect of permanent liberty, civil and religious, can be realized.

The thorough Independents might have succeeded in securing religious freedom for their country, but for the existence of factions deeply pledged to certain traditionary forms of opinion—the prelatists on the one hand, who were ever watching their opportunity to restore the abolished hierarchy; and the presbyterians on the other, who were determined not to relinquish the adventitious position they had acquired.

* See note on page 15. Milton confirms Shakspeare's account of the Jerusalem Chamber.

The latter, in particular, were especially intent on the prosecution of their designs. It is difficult to say which predominated, their zeal for the presbyterian polity, or their hostility to toleration. Their perseverance, notwithstanding the manifest injustice of their exclusive claims and the innumerable obstacles that opposed them, is even yet a matter for wonder. Every method, likely or unlikely,—every kind of instrumentality, worthy or unworthy, was employed to further their projects. Led on by the "Scots Commissioners," who never forgot to turn to the best account their relation to the estates, assemblies, and army of Scotland; emboldened by their numerical strength in the synod of Westminster, where they could always command overwhelming majorities; encouraged by their influential position in the city, whose rich lectureships and livings they had secured, almost without exception; they were resolutely bent on procuring the establishment of their polity and worship, on the ruins of all others. Their success was vastly disproportionate to their efforts. They hoped to see the "two nations" brought to "the nearest possible agreement." It was their thought by day, their dream by night, to bring every village, town, city, county, in England, under the coercive sway of their "parochial, classical, presbyterial, and provincial assemblies," and thus to have had the moulding of the entire British mind.* To accomplish this, their

* "The Perfection of Justification maintained against the Pharisee: The Purity of Sanctification against the Stainers of it: The Unquestionablenesse of a Future Glorification against the Sadducee: In several Sermons. Together with an Apologetic Answer to the Ministers of the New Province of London, in Vindication of the Author against their Aspersions. By John Simpson, an unworthy Publisher of Gospel-truths in London. 1648."

attendance in the Westminster synod was most exemplary, and their votes were given with great prudence and judgment; the London press was constantly occupied by the Rutherfords, Baillies, Edwardses, and Walkers of their party; the reformed churches of the continent were corresponded with, and urgently solicited to aid them by letters confirmatory of their doctrine and polity, while their great men—their Moulins, Forbeses, Voetiuses, Spanheims, Drelincourts, Apolloniuses, and L'Empereurs—were pestered with solicitations to write down Independency; members of parliament were watched, followed, courted, and all but won over to espouse their interests, and the most strenuous efforts were made to fill up vacancies in the representation of the country, by members who held their own views. In addition to this, they endeavoured to bribe the "dissenting brethren," by offers of the best livings in England, with "assurance of a personal dispensation to them for their whole life, if they would leave but that one intolerable tenet of separation." * But their expectations were too sanguine. After many delays, they had the bitter mortification of finding that they were not to be trusted. Their directory of worship, their confession of faith, and their metrical version of the Psalms, received at last the sanction of parliament; but their presbyterian system was considered as of too questionable a character to be adopted, except in a limited and experimental manner, and was never established as the religion of the country. In March, 1646, they obtained an ordinance for setting up a presbytery in London and in Lancashire; but it was considered "so defective,"

* Baillie's "Dissuasive from the Errors of the Time, etc." 1646. p. 105; Hanbury, iii. 146.

that the city, and the assembly, and the London ministers of their order petitioned against it. They might meet in synodical form at Sion College; they might appoint examiners or triers, to pronounce on the fitness or unfitness of candidates for the ministry; they might, as far as the metropolis was concerned, arrange the churches according to their system, appoint elders in all the congregations, hold church-services in every parish, set up twelve presbyteries, and turn London into a presbyterial province.* And in doing all this, they might occupy for a season a position of favour and patronage, and conduct a petty persecution against anabaptists, antinomians, Independents, and so called sectaries.† But the ordinance gave no power of "rigorous enforcement," and prescribed no "penalty" on

* Baillie; Letter 148.

† "The Perfection of Justification, etc.," Epistle Dedicatory, and The Second Epistle. In this work, which seems scarce, we have an insight into the system. The Second Epistle is dedicated "to the two and fifty parish ministers within the new province of London, who have subscribed unto that pamphlet, which is wickedly and unjustly called by them; *A Testimonie to the truth of Jesus Christ, and to our solemn League and Covenant.*" In the body of the Epistle we find the following: "It seemeth that the strange and hidden virtue of your presbyterian-government hath suddenly turned our famous citie into a province, and made you ministers of this presbyterian province. Did ever Christ or his apostles turne free cities or countreyes into provinces by bringing in any ecclesiastical government upon those who were converted to the faith? What is any province, to speak properly, but a region or country subdued by force of armes, and kept under jurisdiction by a lieutenant sent thither, with commission to governe; as the schoole-boys know very well, who know the meaning of that phrase in Cæsar's Commentaries,—*in provinciam redigere, etc.*"

dissentients.* Moreover, the whole was an experiment subject to the approval of the king, with an "allowance" for a limited time only.† Before the term had expired, the course of public events disconcerted all the original measures of the party. The Westminster Assembly was dissolved, and a new order of things commenced.

The failure of the presbyterians is attributable to the resistance of the Erastians and Independents, but chiefly to that of the latter. The moderate Independents of the assembly, and the thorough Independents without, were agreed in opposing the pretensions of those who aspired to ecclesiastical domination. Widely as they differed respecting the theory of a religious establishment, and in their views of what was practicable at that time, they acted in concert, or at least, co-ordinately, in relation to the aims of the presbyterians. Probably there has never been a period in the history of Independency in this country, in which a similar division of the Independent body has not been observable, together with similar manifestations of union in practical matters.

Philip Nye, and the Independents of the assembly, rendered great service to their country, and to the cause of scriptural religion, by their eloquent exposition and defence of the congregational polity. Though few, they were never worsted in debate. Always in the minority, they were nevertheless acknowledged to have the best of the argument, by the independent thinkers of their day; and none can peruse the papers

* "A Declaration of the Faith and Order owned and practised in the Congregational Churches," etc. 1659: Hanbury, iii. 530.

† Bartlet's "Model of the Primitive Congregational Way," etc. 1647. p. 135; Hanbury, iii. 244. Carlyle's Cromwell, I. 282, 311.

which they left behind them, in justification of their dissent from the majority of the assembly, without perceiving the force and superiority of their reasonings. They were continually gaining friends and adherents amongst the best educated minds in the metropolis; and while the party in parliament grew stronger from year to year, even such members as were not wholly convinced by their arguments, saw quite enough of reason in them, to induce them to withold their sanction from the exclusive pretensions of the presbyterians. It appears more than probable, also, that the opinions of the thorough Independents influenced them in the right direction, even though they failed to bring them exactly into a right position respecting the question of toleration. In the early period of the assembly, as we have already seen, their views were rather intolerant than otherwise; and when the assembly was dissolved, they were not the avowed advocates of perfect religious liberty. But during the interval, their opinions had undergone a considerable change. Towards the close of 1644, we find Dr. Thomas Goodwin and Philip Nye asking for a toleration for their own party; but in November of the succeeding year, we find the same persons, together with Simpson and Burroughes, contending for a toleration of all religious parties not involved in fundamental errors.* Although the change of sentiment

* In September, 1644, Cromwell, Vane, and St. John, procured an order for a Committee of Accommodation, to consider the objections of the Independents to the resolutions of the assembly, and with a view to "relieving tender consciences." This committee was dissolved in the course of a few months, but revived in November, 1645. Goodwin and Nye only were on the first committee, but all four on the second.

was not perfect, it was sufficient to ally them to their more advanced brethren without, and served practically to strengthen the party in the eyes of the country. Sir Harry Vane was a kind of connecting link between the two classes of Independents. After his conversion to decidedly liberal views, he advocated them with great eloquence and fervour, both in the assembly, and in the House of Commons. He was the means of convincing some parties of the justice of the principles for which the Independents contended, and amongst the rest Rouse, whose metrical version of the Psalms, although adopted by the assembly, seemed less perfect in the judgment of the presbyterians from that time.

The chief cause, however, of the failure of the presbyterian party is to be traced to the complexion and success of the parliamentary army, under Fairfax and Cromwell, after it had been "new-modelled" in 1645. But we reserve this subject for the following chapter.

CHAPTER II.

THE INDEPENDENTS UNDER THE COMMONWEALTH AND THE PROTECTORATE. 1649—1660.

In the early period of the war, the army of the parliament, although nominally one under the Earl of Essex as commander-in-chief, acted in two great divisions, one of which was under Essex and Waller, and the other under Manchester and Cromwell. Besides these, the Scots' army under Leslie might be considered as only another portion of the general force. This tripartite division of a power which ought to have been one, was felt by many sagacious minds to be inconvenient. To make matters worse, it was found that the officers, more especially such as were members of parliament, divided the counsels of the army, and weakened its strength by their hesitancy, vacillation, and intrigue, in respect to the final object of the war. Such a condition of things was felt by many both in the House of Commons and the army to be distracting and perilous, and the result was a series of attempts to get rid of the evil. Without entering into particulars, it may be stated generally that the counsels of the more earnest prevailed. An ordinance, called "the self-denying ordinance," passed both houses, which compelled members of parliament to throw up their commissions, and was followed by

another ordinance for the new modelling of the army, which was thenceforth brought into one compact force under Fairfax as Lord General. This occurred in 1645. From this time the popular party triumphed. Oliver Cromwell became second in command, inspired the troops with his own valour and unity of purpose, and in the end scattered the royalists beyond the power of recovery.

We have reserved for this place the consideration of the character and influence of the great hero of the age, and of those Independents who served under him with so much valour and success. Although their engagements were of a military nature, it devolves upon us to show how far their principles as Independents were connected with their achievements.

Unlike many of those who served on the side of the parliament, Oliver Cromwell engaged in the war with an earnest determination to carry it on with all vigour, and, if possible, to a successful issue, against Charles and his adherents. A great number, at the commencement of the struggle, were moved by views similar to those of the Coventry people described by Baxter, who "believed that the war was only to save the parliament and kingdom from papists and delinquents, and to remove the dividers, that the king might again return to his parliament; and that no changes might be made in religion, but by the laws which had his free consent."* It seems probable that Cromwell saw from the commencement the impracticability of conducting operations successfully on such grounds; detected the probable course of events; and laid those plans by which his views might be carried out. Although sympathizing with parliament

* Orme's Baxter, i. 55.

in its opposition to the prerogative notions and papistical leanings of the court, he also sympathized with a large and increasing number of the people in their views respecting the iniquity of state interference in matters of religion. Aided by the lights of past experience, he perceived that the evil most to be deprecated, as the root of all or nearly all the evils that had afflicted the kingdom, not only in Charles's reign, but also in those of his predecessors, was the admitted right of the civil power so to legislate for religion as to bind over the popular conscience to a forced obedience. On this point he felt deeply; and to the close of life this feeling never deserted him. Even in after years, when the force of circumstances raised him to supreme power, and a sense of danger compelled him to abridge in some respects the civil liberties of his subjects, his convictions on this point held undiminished sway over his mind. This may be said to have been the ruling passion of his soul—an all-absorbing desire to lead the people of England, more especially the religious portion of the people, in a kind of new Exodus, out of the land of bondage. The predominance of this master impulse, which his high religious temperament nursed into energy, is the true key to the character of Cromwell, as evinced in his public life. By it his genius was swayed and moulded, his sense quickened, his will nerved, his soul bowed. By it, as by a kind of superhuman impulse, he was sustained in all his multifarious toils, and in all the matchless heroism of his exploits. He was, in the highest sense, a man of one idea; but that idea was vast enough to fill all the void, and potent enough to set in motion all the attributes, of his great mind. From the moment when he became the conscious subject of

the spiritual religion of the gospel, he appears instinctively to have realized the cognate idea of liberty of conscience. In every stage of his subsequent life, it grew with his growth. The persecutions of Laud, and the tyranny of Charles, only made his convictions more strong, and his love of liberty more passionate. When he was brought into the House of Commons as a representative of the people, he saw, only more clearly than ever, that the one thing needful for the salvation of the country was, its liberation from whatever was associated with the reign of spiritual tyranny. And when first the rupture between Charles and the parliament broke out into war, he threw himself into the contest, not for any temporal or merely secular ends; not even for the purposes of civil liberty merely; but in the confident belief that a new and better order of things could be ushered in only by humbling Charles, his court, and party, to the dust, and thereby clearing the ground of all the long-established precedents of spiritual despotism. Hence the otherwise inexplicable resolution and fervour of his bearing from the commencement of the civil war. He sighed for a new epoch, and battled for it against the traditionary institutions of past ages. To his mind, the time of liberation had come; and he saw, or thought he saw, the hand of God in the movements of the times, beckoning him onwards.

If this view of Cromwell's character is not deemed sufficient to explain his conduct at a later period, it is, at any rate, sufficient to explain it during this portion of his career. The untiring zeal and consummate mastery he displayed in first raising his troop of horse, and afterwards in making his way to virtual supremacy in the army;—the patient and successful

manner in which he gathered around him officers and soldiers whose principles and aims were similar to his own, either by introducing them to his regiments, or influencing such as were already there;—the submission with which he yielded to all the commands of his superiors, whether Manchester, Fairfax, or the parliament, so long as they proved their sincerity in the cause of liberty against the king, and the determined method he invariably took wherever these superiors appeared to halt in their measures, either through infirmity of purpose, or sinister motives;—the calmness with which he bided his time for advanced and ever-advancing influence in the army and the state, and the unalterable course he pursued towards the royalists and the people of England at large, as he gradually acquired that influence;—all these things seem to indicate the presence in his soul of the one commanding impulse to which reference has been made. It is generally admitted, even by those who put the worst construction upon his later courses, that he had no ambitious projects in tho earlier period of his public life; and yet in that period it was, that all this amazing energy was developed. The conclusion, therefore, is warranted, that from the outset he was impelled by the lofty passion of liberating his brethren from the galling yoke under which they had suffered so much and so long.

But while the character of this remarkable man demands special elucidation, it should not be overlooked that he was surrounded by a staff of officers, and sustained by the enthusiasm of a body of soldiers, who, to a large extent, sympathized with him in all his peculiar views. At the commencement of the war, the majority of the army, whether officers or men,

were nominally presbyterian;* but in the course of time, great numbers either became converted to, or made way for such as held, other views. However accounted for, it is indisputable that from year to year the army of the parliament became more liberalized,—both in respect to civil and ecclesiastical principles, until at length presbyterianism almost died away or returned to its own country. Cromwell's influence, from the commencement, was wholly thrown into the scale of Independency. His famous troop of cavalry, composed chiefly of freeholders and freeholders' sons, besides soon learning the lessons of civil and religious freedom, were early led to act on the principles of a voluntary congregationalism;† and the officers, amongst whom were such men as Desborough, Thornhaugh, Harrison, and Ireton, were leaders as much in religious as in military matters. Lord Brooke and John Hampden were prevented, by their untimely decease, from rendering the army similar services to those just referred to in the case of Cromwell. Those illustrious patriots, however, had gathered around them, and attracted to the parliamentary forces, a considerable body of high-principled men, who acted afterwards in the spirit of their fallen chiefs. From these begin-

* According to Baxter, at first "each regiment had an able preacher; but at Edgehill fight, almost all of them went home; and as the sectaries increased, they were the more averse to go into the army." He also informs us that these able preachers, no doubt presbyterian, were stigmatised as "Military Levites." Life, i. p. 52.

† "His officers," says Baxter, "purposed to make their troop a gathered church, and they all subscribed an invitation to me to be their pastor. . . . These very men were the men that headed much of the army, and some of them were the forwardest in all our charges." Ibid.

nings, the army became gradually leavened with the religious spirit; and after its consolidation by the operation of the new model, it may almost be said to have been the army of the Independents.

Of course the above will be regarded as a general statement only. There were many exceptions. In some regiments presbyterianism prevailed, but in its more simple forms; in others, extreme views, amounting to fanaticism; and in a few a spirit only a degree removed from that of the Levellers of a later period. It should also be observed that baptist, or as they were still termed anabaptist opinions, either coalesced with or divided those of the Independents, while the great cementing principle which kept all in order was the principle of liberty of conscience. The testimony of Baxter, on this latter point, is only one out of the many that might be adduced; but it is given in a manner so illustrative of the condition of the army in one of its most singular aspects, that we quote it at length. Let the reader excuse the egotism of the man who thought himself more than a match in logomacy for the invincible Ironsides, and deem himself compensated by the following.

"Here," he writes, referring to the camp of Cromwell, "I set myself from day to day to find out the corruptions of the soldiers, and to discourse and dispute them out of their mistakes, both religious and political. My life among them was a daily contending against seducers, and gently arguing with the most tractable; but another kind of warfare I had than theirs. I found that many honest men, of weak judgments, and little acquaintance with such matters, had been seduced into a disputing vein, and made it too much of their religion to talk for this opinion and

for that; sometimes for state democracy, and sometimes for church democracy; sometimes against forms of prayer, and sometimes against infant baptism, which yet some of them did maintain; sometimes against set times of prayer, and against the tying of ourselves to any duty before the Spirit move us; and sometimes about free-grace and free-will, and all the points of antinomianism and arminianism. So that I was almost always, when I had opportunity, disputing with one or other of them; sometimes for our civil government, and sometimes for church order and government; sometimes for infant baptism, and oft against antinomianism and the contrary extreme. But their most frequent and vehement disputes were for liberty of conscience, as they called it; that is, that the civil magistrate had nothing to do to determine anything in matters of religion, by constraint or restraint; but every man might not only hold, but preach and do, in matters of religion, what he pleased: that the civil magistrate hath nothing to do but with civil things."*

In another place the same witness testifies to the influence of those whom he stigmatizes on account of their zeal in the cause of religious truth and liberty, partly, no doubt, because they were as invincible to his dialectics as they were to Charles's cavaliers. "Abundance of the common troopers," he writes, "and many of the officers, I found to be honest, sober, orthodox men; others were tractable, ready to hear the truth, and of upright intentions. But a few proud, self-conceited, hot-headed sectaries had got into the highest places, and were Cromwell's chief favourites; and, by their very heat and activity, bore down the rest, or carried them along with them. These were

* Baxter's Life, i. 53.

the soul of the army, though much fewer in number than the rest, being indeed not one in twenty in it." *

Making allowance for the quarter from which these testimonies come, and remembering that in Baxter's vocabulary a "hot-headed sectary" is only another name for a zealous advocate of liberty of conscience, we are thankful that he should have recorded his observations respecting the composition of this remarkable army. The same passion that moved the great Cromwell to heroic deeds, inspired those also whom Baxter has designated "the soul of the army;" nerved them with unwonted courage; united them, amidst great diversities of character and opinion, in a bond of strictest amity; and led the way to all those brilliant successes which still astonish the world. For once in the history of military affairs, religious sentiment became more potent than cupidity and the love of glory. For once the spectacle was to be witnessed of an army of earnestly devout and therefore irresistible warriors, moved to engage in war from no mercenary motives, but from love of liberty; animated in their exploits not by the hope of plunder and rapine, but by the prospect of enfranchising their fellow-countrymen; and who, if sectaries, were so only by accident, while in the highest sense they were philanthropists on principle. Of these men, the most servile of historians has written: "When they were marching to battle, the whole field resounded as well with psalms and spiritual songs, adapted to the occasion, as with the instruments of military music; and every man endeavoured to drown the sense of present danger in the prospect of

* Ibid. i. 50.

that crown of glory which was set before him. In so holy a cause, wounds were esteemed meritorious; death, martyrdom; and the hurry and dangers of action, instead of banishing their pious visions, rather served to impress their minds more strongly with them." * Neither should we omit the testimony of Sprigge, one of Fairfax's chaplains, whose opportunities of forming a correct estimate of the real character of the army were of a rare order. "The officers of this army," he says, "were such as knew little more of war than our own unhappy wars taught them, except some few. Indeed, I may say this: they were better Christians than soldiers, wiser in faith than in fighting, and could believe a victory sooner than contrive it. Yet they were as wise in soldiery as the little time and experience they had could make them. Many of the officers, with their men, were much engaged in prayer and reading the scriptures; an exercise that soldiers, till of late, have used but little; and thus they went on and prospered. Men conquer better as they are saints than soldiers, and in the counties where they came, they left something of God, as well as Cæsar, behind them; something of piety, as well as pay. The army was, by example and justice, kept in good order, both in respect of itself and the country. Nor was it their pay that pacified them; for, had they not had more civility than money, things had not been so fairly managed. There were many of them differing in opinion, yet not in action or business; they all agreed to preserve the kingdom; they prospered more in their amity than in their uniformity. Whatever their opinions were, they plundered none with

* Hume's Hist. of England; Anno. 1654.

them, they betrayed none with them, nor disobeyed the state with them; and they were more visibly pious and peaceable in their opinions than those we call more orthodox."*

Yet further light is thrown upon the principles of those who composed the army by the statement of Edwards, that they were as much opposed to the establishment of Independency as presbyterianism; that "they held liberty of conscience; that no man should be bound or tied to anything, but every man left free to hold what he pleased; that was the judgment and true genius of that sort of men in the army called Independents—that in all matters of religion, no man should be bound, but every one left to follow his own conscience."† They were, in fact, thorough Independents. In matters pertaining to religion, they called "no man master." While they understood civil subordination and order as well as any class of men of that day; they would not acknowledge the right of

* Sprigge's Anglia Rediviva; 1647, pp. 324, 325; Orme's Baxter, i. 66. Respecting Sprigge's book, Carlyle writes, "None of the old books is better worth reprinting."—Cromwell's Letters and Speeches, i. 222.

† Third Part of Gangræna, etc. 1646, p. 175. Hanbury (iii. 187), seems to think that Edwards did not "discriminate between the Independents and the Erastians," in making this statement. It appears to us that Hanbury, and not Edwards, is in fault here. The Erastians opposed the divine right of all forms of church government; but on this very ground they conceded to the state the right to appoint any it pleased. Erastus himself, Cranmer, Whitgift, and the Erastians of this period, were all of this opinion. How then can the sentiments of those who are described in Edwards' narrative be called Erastian? It was not that they opposed all forms of church government; but the being "tied," or "bound" to any, by the secular, or any other power, external to the individual conscience.

any to dictate to the conscience. While they yielded obedience to their superiors in all points relating to military duty, they knew how to echo the language of the apostle, "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?" whenever the slightest attempt was made to bring them under ecclesiastical bondage. Perhaps, an opportunity more favourable than that which was afforded in the army of Fairfax never occurred, of exhibiting the compatibility of perfect religious liberty with subordination and order.

It does not come within our province to narrate the various engagements of this unparalleled army during the period of the civil war. It is sufficient for our purpose to state that it was invariably successful. From the affair at Islip bridge, in 1645, to the battle of Worcester, in 1651, with scarcely a single reverse, triumph waited on its march. Whether against cavaliers in England, papists in Ireland, or presbyterians in Scotland, its arms were always victorious. But more remarkable than even its successes was the sobriety of its demeanour. Courageous before the foe, and self-possessed in the shock of war, it knew no excess in the hour of victory. Into whatever city, town, village, district, it came, the inhabitants had nothing to fear from the soldiers of Cromwell. No licence was given to base and ferocious passions, as the reward of valour; no licence was asked. Drunkenness, theft, impurity, were vices unknown, or if known, at once visited with punishment, as exceptions to the rule. Wherever the troops were quartered, none suffered from their presence. They paid for their provision and victualling, and instead of spreading the contagion of evil practices, were the very patrons of morality. Vice and superstition alone

fled at their approach; virtue and religion revived and flourished. Those who had dreaded their approach as the invasion of a moral pestilence, through ignorance of their real character, or in consequence of imputing to the troops of Cromwell the profligacy of those of the royalists, were speedily undeceived, and as unwilling to part with their presence as they had once been to anticipate it. Instead of ribald songs, obscene jests, oaths and blasphemies, they heard only the psalms of David, and the accents of prayer. The soldiers' barracks, instead of proving a den of iniquity, became the home of the virtues, and in many cases assumed much more of the character of a house of God, than the neighbouring parish church.

That such was the complexion of the army under Fairfax and Cromwell cannot be denied by any one acquainted with the memorials of the period. The testimony of contemporary writers is unanimous on the subject. Charges of fanaticism, enthusiasm, sectarianism, and so forth, may have been brought against it by writers whose only notions of religion are those of a decent and formal compliance with the requirements of an established hierarchy. But none have brought to light any facts tending to disprove the statement we have made respecting its sober and moral demeanour. A full inquiry into the causes of this singular phenomenon would lead to valuable results illustrative of our general subject. It would be found, that while the genius of Cromwell was instrumental to the discipline and general organization of the army, the troops composing that army were prepared, by certain characteristics rarely met with, to fall into his plans and further his designs. It should not be forgotten, that they were not conscripts, but volunteers,

who might have deserted at any time to the royalists, or have retired from military service altogether. The unexampled discipline to which they were subject could not have been carried out, if it had not had their hearty approval. Indeed it is scarcely correct to speak of them as an army, in the ordinary sense of the word. They were rather a choice portion of the nation, who had relinquished their ordinary pursuits in a season of public danger, and entered into a compact for the purposes of securing and defending the liberties of the country. No amount of pay could have hired such an army; and no other party save that to which Cromwell belonged could have mustered the materials of which it was formed. We are shut up to the conclusion that, it was the personal religion and high toned principle of those composing the army, which led them to join it in the first instance, and to endure that discipline, unbearable to others, but perfectly easy to them, which made the soldiers of Cromwell what they were. The more particular our inquiries on this point, the more will this view of it be confirmed.

We now turn from this general review of the character of the new-modelled army, to the consideration of those events affecting the king, the parliament, and the destinies of the nation, in which it bore so prominent a part.

Defeated in all his attempts to recover his kingdom by the sword, and in every battle offensive or defensive, from the first decisive one at Naseby in 1645, to the last dying effort in Gloucestershire, under Sir Jacob Astley in March, 1646, Charles determined to try how far he could succeed by manœuvre. His first scheme was a proposal to parliament to

disband his troops, and give up all his garrisons, on condition that he might return to Whitehall, and reign there again as if nothing had happened. Parliament, naturally enough, refused to listen to his proposal. This measure failing, and knowing that he could not long escape his foes, who were fast hastening towards Oxford, where he held his court—he determined to prevent the speedy, and possibly unfavourable decision of his case, which might have attended his capture as a prisoner of war, by taking refuge in the Scottish Camp at Newark. Two things prompted this step: the vote of parliament, which cut off all hope of a favourable reception in London; and a secret compact between Montreuil, Henrietta's agent, and the Scotch Commissioners, to the effect that Charles should be treated with all respect by the Scotch army. The final negociation was conducted by Hudson, who accompanied the king from Oxford, and procured a promise from the Scotch, that the king should have personal liberty, religious toleration, and protection in his cause even against the English parliament. Complying with the overture that had thus been made, Charles thought it possible that his personal presence might inspire his Scotch subjects with a loyalty to which for some time they had been strangers, and that in a favourable mood they might listen to his proposals to win back for him the kingdom he had lost. He soon found out his mistake. He had miscalculated both the sincerity of his betrayers, and the power of a fallen monarch either to influence or cajole. When the Scotch found him obstinate in his refusal to take the covenant and turn presbyterian,*

* Baillie's Letters throw much desirable light on this portion of British history. The Scotch Commissioners in London brought

they gave up his cause as desperate; and at length consented to the reiterated demands of the parliament of England that he should be delivered up to them. After receiving a large sum of money for the services they had rendered to the general cause,* they handed Charles over to the parliamentary commissioners, and, according to stipulation, withdrew their army from the English territory. The king was now nominally in the possession of the parliament of England, by whose authority he was conveyed in safe custody to Holmby, near Northampton.

This event occurred on the 13th of February, 1647. Before this period, the presbyterians had pressed forward their measures for the establishment of their own polity and worship, and had procured many enactments prejudicial to the royalists and sectaries.

about much of the mischief that led to the embroilment of the two kingdoms. See in particular Letters, 135, 136, 147, 150, 152, 153, 155. We learn from Letter 150, that Henderson's controversy with Charles on Episcopacy was a mere sham—"merely politic, and a pretence to gain time."

* Respecting this money, the following particulars from Baillie's letter to Mr. George Young, (167) of Dec. 1st, are worth noting. "The £200,000 was all told on Friday last. All this day our commissioners have been agreeing upon the way of its receiving, and the going home of our army. We have had sore labour these weeks by gone, to put on many things in the Houses, Assembly, and City, much ado to get the great sum. It was my dear friend Dr. Burges' singular invention, that all who contribute to this sum, should have as much of his old debt, with all the annual rents counted to him, and for all, make a good pennyworth of the bishop's lands; so the bargain being exceeding advantageous, the strife was who should come in with his money soonest. By this means we got the bishop's lands on our back without any grudge, and in a way that no skill will get them back again." This is a revelation not to be passed over.

It would appear, that while the negotiations between Charles and the Scotch were pending, they were emboldened to this line of precedure, in the confident hope of securing the king on their own terms. They now went a step further, and prepared for their last stroke of policy—that by which all their long cherished aims would be accomplished—by seeking to disband the army of the parliament. The Scotch army had retired, or was retiring; and if the parliamentary forces could be got rid of in the same easy manner, they doubted not to be able to complete all their plans. With the city, the militia, and a fluctuating majority of the House of Commons on their side, they were assured of ultimate success.

But in making these calculations, the presbyterians proved their own want of foresight. Their zeal seemed to rob them of all common sagacity. A conciliatory conduct towards the Independents, who were now a powerful party in the country, as well as in the army, and whose leading men were as sensitive to wrong as they were ready to repel it, was the only course dictated by common prudence. Of this prudence they were utterly destitute. Imagining themselves safe, because the forces of the royalists had been ruined, they took the most direct steps they could to provoke that very power by which the nation was brought into its present state. Overrating the importance really attached to the decisions of parliament in that crisis, they procured ordinances for the disbanding of the army, and with great haste proceeded to carry them into execution. And now the conflict between the army and the parliament commenced. It is scarcely necessary to state that the army prevailed. Calm and wary in every passage of difficulty

or of danger; bold, decided, energetic, whenever the opportunity of furthering their plans presented itself; its chiefs were never foiled in any of their undertakings. Instead of disbanding,* it formed itself into a kind of military republic. Every question respecting its proceedings was put to the vote. Each regiment had its representatives, known by the name of adjutators, who were the medium of communication between the principal officers and the troops. Agreed, or nearly so, in every step which they took, their movements were always decided and effectual. Never was such another army known. Numbering in all about 22,000 men, it was of one mind and soul. Like an eagle, it descended with fell swoop on its quarry. Like a thunder cloud, it discharged its vengeance in one decisive effort on the foe. There was no possibility of evading it; there was no resisting its will. Even Cromwell himself knew and felt this, and was content to guide and control when he could not compel.

Before narrating the steps by which the army advanced to supreme power, it may be of service to take a correct view of the relation it sustained towards the parties into which the nation was divided, and in particular of that by which it was nominally governed. In order to this, it is necessary to divest our minds of all those notions which attach to ordinary armies, fed and paid on a purely mercenary principle. As already stated, the army of the commonwealth was neither collected nor organized on this principle. It was

* It may here be stated, that the corps of Massey, known as the Army of the West, the only portion of the general army inclined to presbyterianism, was disbanded, in compliance with the orders of parliament, in October, 1646 Thus the presbyterians played the game of their adversaries.

called into being by a great national emergency. The liberties of the country, civil and religious, were in peril. At the instigation, and under the sanction of parliament, the several members composing this army—patriotic, enlightened, and for the most part religious men—flocked together from all quarters, relinquishing all the comforts of private life and prepared to spend their energies and shed their blood in the defence of the people of England. It was the cause of the patriot, not the pay or profession of the soldier, that induced them to enlist. While their fellow countrymen followed their rural or mercantile avocations in peace, they were passing through all the stages of severe military discipline, or hazarding their lives on the field of battle. Was all this self-denial and superior devotement to their country's interests to be requited by political disfranchisement? or was the circumstance of their entering into a military organization to incapacitate them for forming an opinion respecting the country's wants, and to rob them of their previous rights as British subjects? They thought not. Neither could they understand how their successful efforts against one national foe could be construed into a reason for their succumbing to such as might yet remain. They determined, therefore, before they disbanded, to finish the work for which they had sacrificed so much; and having triumphed so far, they thought it not impossible that they might be victorious to the end.*

* "The question is not to be viewed as between a constitutional parliament, and a usurping army, but as between the presbyterian majority on the one side, and the Independent minority supported by the army on the other; in short, as between two great political parties, who are to be estimated not by words or names, but by their respective measures and principles."—Mackintosh's History of England, vi. 37.

That such were the views of the army respecting its own "case," may be gathered from the various "remonstrances," "appeals," and "manifestoes," it put forth from time to time. The following, for example, occurs in a letter addressed to the lord mayor, aldermen, and common council of the City of London, in June, 1647, signed by Fairfax, Cromwell, and eleven superior officers. "As for the thing we insist upon as Englishmen—and surely our being soldiers hath not stript us of that interest, although our malicious enemies would have it so—we desire a settlement of the peace of the kingdom and of the liberties of the subject, according to the votes and declarations of parliament, which, *before* we took arms, were, by the parliament, used as arguments and inducements to invite us and divers of our dear friends out; some of whom have lost their lives in this war. Which being now, by God's blessing, finished—we think we have as much right to demand, and desire to see, a happy settlement, as we have to our money and to the other common interests of soldiers which we have insisted upon. We find also the ingenuous and honest people, in almost all parts of the kingdom where we come, full of the sense of ruin and misery, if the army should be disbanded *before* the peace of the kingdom, and those other things before mentioned, have a full and perfect settlement. We seek the good of all. And we shall wait here, or remove to a farther distance to abide there, if once we be assured that a speedy settlement of things is in hand—until it be accomplished."*

The following, from a "Representation" addressed to the parliamentary commissioners a few days after

* Cromwell's Letters and Speeches, by T. Carlyle, vol. 1, pp. 298, 299.

the last, is to the same effect: "We are not a mercenary army, hired to serve any arbitrary power of state; but called forth and conjured by the several declarations of parliament, to the defence of our own and the people's just rights and liberties; and so we took up arms in judgment and conscience to those ends, and are resolved—according to your first just desires and declarations, and such principles as we have received from your frequent informations, and our own common sense concerning these our fundamental rights and liberties—to assert and vindicate them against all arbitrary power, violence, and oppression, and all particular interests and parties whatsoever." *

Holding such views as these, it was not likely that the army would yield to the demands of a fluctuating majority of the House of Commons. There was no prospect, as things were going on, of a peaceful settlement of the nation. The presbyterian leaders in and out of parliament were insanely bent upon carrying all before them—fomenting disorders, promoting violent petitions, raising the prejudices and jealousy of the city, procuring hasty votes in both houses against the army, and even summoning its officers to give an account of their proceedings. Such conduct, to say the least, was unwise. The brave soldiers became indignant, and proceeded to action. Their first step was to obtain possession of Charles, which was soon effected.

On the 2nd of June, the king attended by the parliamentary commissioners was playing at bowls on Althorpe Down, near Holmby, when a stranger in

* Parliamentary Hist. iii. 622. Mackintosh's Hist. of England vi. 56. The "representation" was drawn up by Ireton. It is a wonderful document both for style and matter.

the uniform of Fairfax's guards suddenly appeared amongst them. While they were questioning him, news came that a body of horse was approaching Holmby. All mounted in haste, galloped back to Holmby, and on entering shut to the gates. The report was true. In the course of that night, Cornet Joyce with five hundred troopers arrived at Holmby House, and soon obtained admission. The commissioners had no power to resist. At ten o'clock of the same night, Joyce entered Charles's apartment, introduced himself to his majesty, who was in bed, and acquainting him with his mission, retired. The next morning, Joyce drew up his troops in the court-yard, under the windows of the king's apartment, and then proceeded to take possession of his person. There was some parleying between them before Charles would submit. "Come, Mr. Joyce, be frank with me," said the king, "tell me where is your commission?" "There it is, sir," Joyce replied, pointing to the court below. "Where?" repeated the king. "There, sir;" and the king looking down, saw the troops drawn up in perfect array, waiting their leader's commands. "Your instructions are written in very legible characters," his majesty exclaimed; "'tis truely a fair commission—you have as handsome a company as I have seen for a great while."

The army had now gained their first point, and prevented, it is thought, some dark designs against the king's life on the part of the presbyterians.† Their

* Headley's Life of Oliver Cromwell. pp. 157, 158; an admirable and spirited biography, from the New York press—one of the first-fruits of Carlyle's sterling work.

† Baillie seems to hint at this in more places than one, and the army expressed its suspicions.

next step was to vindicate themselves from the insults they had received from some members of parliament, and to purify the house of those who had sought to instigate the people to disorder. To accomplish this they advanced towards London. By this time the presbyterian party were dreadfully alarmed. The game was passing out of their hands. Their cause would speedily become hopeless. In their terror they scarcely knew how to act. While the Independents were calm and deliberate, keeping to their purpose, and holding themselves in reserve for any emergency, this party seemed to have lost its wits. They exasperated the army by the foulest abuse; sought to stir up the inhabitants of the metropolis, then crowded with malignants and refugee royalists from the scattered armies of Charles, to acts of violence; and, to make matters still worse, procured repeated votes of the house that the army should not come within twenty five miles of London. Their conduct was the very imbecility of fear.

Notwithstanding these provocations, the army would in all probability have kept its distance for some time to come, if parliament had been left free to follow wiser counsels, and to conduct its business in an orderly manner. Indeed, towards the end of July, 1647, matters calmed down a little, even if they did not "seem as good as settled."* The eleven offending members had withdrawn from the house, Holles' "declaration" against the army had been expunged from its journals, and the presbyterian ordinance for raising a new militia was revoked. But the insane conduct of the city presbyterians spoiled all. They

* Carlyle I. 301.

sent up a petition to the house in favour of the new militia ordinance, and demanded the suppression of the Independent conventicles. Not satisfied with this, they entered into a solemn engagement by oath and vow, binding the subscribers to the number of a hundred thousand—citizens, apprentices, train-bands, soldiers, and sailors—to keep away the army, and bring the king in all honour and safety to Westminster, there to treat with him. On the 26th, at their instigation, a mob of apprentices and others invaded both houses of parliament, and compelled the members by threats and other forcible means to vote according to their petition. Thus overawed, the speakers of both houses with a large body of members fled to the army for protection, and brought about the very act which had been so much deprecated. The army had no alternative left, and immediately put itself in motion for London. In spite of the feeble attempts of the city militia and train-bands under General Massey to resist them, the troops of Fairfax advanced steadily on; and on Friday morning the 6th of August, "with boughs of laurel in their hats," marched "three deep by Hyde Park" into the heart of the city. All was now over. From this period, the Independents were masters of the field.

To narrate in due order all the events which happened after this memorable proceeding, would require considerable space. We shall only advance what is needful to illustrate the conduct pursued by the Independents.

From the facts we have adduced, it is evident that up to this time the army had taken the only course consistent with a regard to self-preservation and the welfare of the nation. There is not the slightest

evidence to prove that either it or its officers had formed any ambitious or merely party designs. Their aim was the general good. They desired to see a peaceable, just, and permanent settlement of the nation. At the same time it should be observed that as the termination of the contest seemed nearer, the mind of the army began to be divided respecting the mode in which that settlement was to be effected. Agreed as to the end, they differed about the means. This was natural enough. It was hardly possible that so numerous a body of thoughtful and intelligent men should arrive at the same conclusion all at once. Some were enamoured of republican principles. Others were in favour of monarchy. A third party, indifferent to all modes of political organization, were prepared to fall in with any which the course of events might indicate as the most practicable for that time. This difference of political views became apparent before the army advanced upon the metropolis, and led to some dissension, not affecting their general regard for civil and religious liberty. The same differences exhibited themselves afterwards, during the whole period both of the commonwealth and protectorate.

The student of this period of British history will do well to bear this in mind. It will explain many difficult passages, and throw much light upon the conduct—sometimes united, sometimes strangely divided—of the now ascendant party. It will exonerate the principles of Independency from all connexion, direct or indirect, with those causes which led, whether to the death of Charles, or the enthronement of the Protector, while it will clearly show how it was that many of the warmest advocates of Independency were avow-

edly implicated in those events. Above all, it will redeem the character of Cromwell from all those charges of inconsistency and hypocrisy which it was once the fashion of almost all historians to bring against him, and which are still credited, notwithstanding their palpable grossness, by the hereditary bigots of party. Having already explained what we believe to have been the predominant impulses of Cromwell's soul in their positive aspect, it is necessary to a proper view of the entire man that we pay attention to those sentiments of reserve which constituted what may be termed his negative character.

On reviewing the public career of this great man and ruler, in all its remarkable and often obscure passages from his first appearance in parliament to his death, it seems impossible to doubt his sincerity. No hypocrite ever succeeded with honest, religious, brave men, as he succeeded. No dissembler, that had gained his ends, ever kept up his character as he did, to the very last. Looking at the whole case, we are warranted in affirming that for such a man to have been an impostor is a moral impossibility. Seldom did the vitality of real godliness display itself more unequivocally or habitually than in his daily conduct, and never, perhaps, in combination with rarer qualities of mind. The want of this combination in his defamers has led them to misinterpret his character. They have judged him after their own standard. Cromwell, throughout his public life, was one of those who were indifferent to the forms of government, provided that real liberty, civil and religious, was secured. He never was a republican on principle. He certainly never did believe in the divine right either of kings or parliaments; as little did he believe in the divine

right of mobs and knaves. While, therefore, he ever kept in view the end of all government, he was open to make terms with any political party or parties that could guarantee that end in perpetuity. Neither was he the man to insist on the pre-eminence, much less the predominance, of his own religious sect. An Independent himself, he never established Independency when he might have done so; and he would have allowed either episcopalians or presbyterians to have the honour of national and state precedence, could that have been admitted without any infringement on the rights of conscience. In this, perhaps, he was in error; but if so, his fault was a generous one, and characteristic of the man. He despised "baubles," both political and religious, but would allow other men to play with them, so long as they kept out of mischief.

This view of Cromwell's character, taken in connexion with that already given of the army, will throw light on the proceedings of both, after supreme power fell into their hands, in 1647. Cromwell would have restored Charles to his throne, and have retired to his former occupations, if the king could have given securities for civil and religious liberty. He even attempted, in several negociations, to bring about a consummation so desirable. The attempt was vain. The duplicity of the king would alone have prevented it, had no other obstacles intervened. While the magnanimous Cromwell was doing his best to restore and establish the throne of the Stuarts on the basis of the public liberties, the infatuated and ungrateful monarch was brooding over the prospect of revenge, and promising his queen to reward him with a halter. But other obstructions arose. The

presbyterians were plotting for themselves. In their vocabulary, freedom was only another name for the establishment of their religious worship and polity, to the exclusion of all others. While there was any hope of Charles's favouring their designs, they patronized him; when they found him obstinate in his episcopalian heresy, they denounced him; and when they found the Independents gaining the ascendancy, they carried on a series of intrigues with him and his partizans both of England and France, not so much for the purpose of reinstating him, as of ruining the advocates of toleration. Another obstacle yet more formidable than these was to be found in the army itself. Republican principles were spreading through the ranks with rapid progress. Every day's events served to give them fresh impulse, and to make new converts, to whom it became more and more evident, that the monarchy could never be restored under so faithless a head as Charles. It was also evident that if the nation were not speedily settled, all would run into confusion. Despairing of all other methods in that unhappy state of affairs, Cromwell, without any dereliction of principle, joined his own soldiers in seeking to establish a republic. Insurrections in various parts of England and Wales, and the invasion of the Scotch at the instigation of Charles, with threatening dangers on all sides arising from the intrigues of the royalists and presbyterians, led on to the great catastrophe. On the 30th January, 1649, the self-doomed monarch was beheaded, in front of Whitehall, and shortly after, England was declared to be a free commonwealth.

The execution of the king was an act respecting which opinion is still greatly divided. Some applaud

it as a deed of justice on a great delinquent.* Others consider it both as a crime and an error.† Perhaps a century hence the world may come to an impartial verdict. At present, we are neither sufficiently near to the scene itself, to appreciate the motives and difficulties of those who brought it about; nor sufficiently remote from the influence of those monarchical superstitions which revived with the restoration. If the commonwealth had perpetuated itself to the present day, how would it be thought of and commemorated? As events have turned out, it does not require much ingenuity to show what consequences might be expected to result from the memorable deed. No vocation is easier than that of the prophet after the fact.

But whatever opinion may be formed respecting the moral character of the deed, there can be no hesitation in pronouncing it a purely political one.‡ Independen-

* Carlyle, I. 442—445. Headley's Cromwell, 252—260.

† Mackintosh's Hist. of England, VI. 131. Macaulay's Hist. of England, from the Accession of James the Second, I. 128.

‡ Bishop Short, in his "Sketch of the History of the Church of England," 1838, p. 407, affirms that "the real question, throughout, was a political one." For a variety of opinions respecting the state of parties, and the causes which led to the execution of the king, see Hanbury, vol. III. chapter lxxv. Note especially the king's vow, in 1646, to restore the Church of England to more than its former wealth and grandeur, in case he should win back his "kingly rights,"—page 355; and the jesuitical advice of the Bishops of London and Sarum, respecting the manner in which he might promise compliance with the wishes of parliament by oath, without keeping it,—pages 356, 357. These documents show what kind of a man the victorious party had to deal with; to say nothing of the famous letter which Cromwell found in the saddle of the king's messenger. Macaulay's statement about the "impression"

dency had nothing to do with it. Its principles have no preferences, where liberty is secured; and, as history abundantly proves, are capable of flourishing equally well under a monarchy, a republic, or a protectorate. The sentiments of the Independents, at this period, respecting the execution of the king and the organic change of the government, are decisive on this point. If Independency were republicanism, there would have been unanimity. But the fact is the reverse of this. Not only was the kingdom at large divided respecting the propriety of such proceedings, it is also capable of proof that the Independents—whether we include in this term the religious Independents only, or those also who advocated their opinions on political grounds—were quite as much divided amongst themselves. While John Goodwin, Milton, Cromwell, Ireton, Colonel Hutchinson, Hugh Peters, and many eminent ministers and members of the Congregational body, were prepared to justify the execution of the king; some congregations in various parts of the kingdom, with their ministers at their

produced "on the public mind," by the captive king, is surely mere painting. Even his own party gave him up at last.—Saunderson's Complete History, 1658, p. 1140; Clarendon's History of the Rebellion, p. 743. Hanbury's view appears to us the correct one: "What plight soever the presbyterians were in, it is clear that 'the sects' were on an equal footing, as regards the awful extremity. It is true, they did not overrule it: neither do we read of any wide, extended concert of the episcopal body, making an effort to avert the catastrophe, on its immediate approach. The clear truth of all is, that the king had made himself generally unpopular, but that the nation was awe-struck at the novelty and greatness, not to say sublimity, of the final result!" In this last sentiment, Carlyle agrees with Hanbury. Carlyle's Cromwell, I. 444.

head, remonstrated against it. The testimony of Charles's principal physician, Dr. George Bates, is express on the latter point. "Some on the Independent side, also," he writes, "declare against the thing in their sermons from the pulpit, in conferences, monitory letters, petitions, protestations, and public remonstrances." * Besides these, a third class were neutral. They neither remonstrated against the proceedings of parliament, nor pronounced a judgment in their favor. The probability is, that while convinced of the lawfulness of bringing a tyrant to the block, they did not feel themselves in a position to decide on the necessities of the state at that particular crisis. There is always a large number of this class in every party—men who either feel their incompetency to decide on the character of public measures, or who deem it expedient to be silent.

While these facts are sufficient to show that Independency had no direct concern in the death of the king, it cannot be denied that a large number of the Independent party approved of the deed, or at least lent it their sanction by acting in concert with those who brought it about.†

It is difficult to determine the precise views of the

* Elenchus Motuum Nuperorum in Anglia; or, A Short Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of the Late Troubles in England," &c.—1685; p. 142. See also Bogue and Bennett's History of the Dissenters, Vol. I. p. 85; Orme's Life of Owen, pp. 68, 69; and Orme's Life of Baxter, I. 133—138. Neal, II. 365.

† Milton writes:—"The Independents, as they are called, were the only men that, from first to last, kept to their point, and knew what use to make of their victory. They refused, and wisely in my opinion, to make him king again, being then an enemy:" &c. First Defence of the People of England, chapter x.

Assembly Independents. But their intimate association with the party seems to involve them in its views.* The same may be said of the illustrious John Owen, at this time one of Fairfax's chaplains. He preached before parliament the day after Charles's death; and although his language was so guarded that it would have been difficult to determine from his sermon whether he approved of it or not, yet the fact of preaching under such circumstances was sufficient to make him a party.† In the following April he was again called to preach before parliament, when he delivered his celebrated discourse on the "Shaking and Translating of Heaven and Earth," in justification of the new order of things. On the 7th of June, both Owen and Thomas Goodwin preached in the city of London, on the occasion of the suppression of the levellers. The speaker at the head of the members of parliament, the council of state, the corporation headed by the lord mayor, and Fairfax, Cromwell, and the chief officers of the army, were all present. The sermons were so much to the purpose, that "a committee was appointed, to consider how to prefer Mr. Thomas Goodwin, and Mr. Owen, to be heads of colleges in Oxford, as a reward for asserting the late proceedings of parliament." ‡ Hugh Peters,—whose name has been so unrighteously defamed, even by

* Burroughes died November 16th, 1646.

† Mr. Orme's attempted and unnecessary apology for Owen—that "his superiors were persons 'whose commands were not to be gainsayed'"—appears to us quite insufficient. Owen might easily have refused to preach at this time, if he had "disapproved of the death of Charles." Besides, the text he chose for the occasion was quite enough to show his mind.

‡ Hanbury, III. 394. Orme's Life of Owen, p. 86.

writers of his own party, in consequence of the infection of restoration and royalist slanders,—was associated with Owen and Goodwin on the occasion.

A brief reference to the lives of two men so celebrated as Owen and Peters, will not be out of place here, before proceeding with our general narrative.

John Owen is said to have been a lineal descendant of Gwrgan ap Ithel, lord of Glamorgan, and through him, of the great Caractacus. He was born at Stadham, in 1616, and received his early education in a private academy at Oxford, under Edward Sylvester, the tutor of the famous William Chillingworth. At twelve years of age he was admitted a student of Queen's college, Oxford, where he became noted for two things not often combined; namely, the most intense devotedness to the pursuits of learning, and a passionate fondness for violent physical exercise. On entering his twentieth year, he had passed the degrees of Bachelor and Master of Arts, and was considered a proficient in mathematical and classical knowledge, as well as in the science of music. In his twenty-first year he became the subject of strong religious convictions, which led to his removal. Laud, at that time Chancellor of Oxford, caused new statutes to be drawn up for the government of the University, and compelled conformity to the Romish ritual he was endeavouring to introduce. Owen's conscience, although not fully enlightened by the gospel, revolted from such mummery; and bidding adieu to the scene of his studies during the previous ten years, he relinquished all his prospects of preferment and place.

This happened in 1637. Having been previously ordained, he did not relinquish the ministry, but be-

came a private chaplain, first in the family of Sir Robert Dormer, and afterwards in that of Lord Lovelace. On the breaking out of the civil war, he sympathized with parliament, and was compelled to leave the family of Lord Lovelace, who zealously espoused the cause of the king. At the same time, and for the same reason, he became estranged from his uncle, by whose liberality he had received a university education. It is almost unnecessary to state, that convictions of duty alone determined Owen in joining the popular party. With broken friendships and diminished resources he repaired to London, and resided for some time in Charter House yard.

In London he early met with a true friend in a cousin of his own name, and was led to an acquaintance with the power of the gospel. He had for some years been the subject of much depression of mind, on account of his inability to obtain that peace which is worth more than all the world besides. What he so much coveted was now realized. Repairing to Aldermanbury church to hear the popular Edmund Calamy, he was disappointed by finding his pulpit occupied by a stranger from the country. But the temporary disappointment was amply compensated. From the lips of this stranger, whose name he could never learn, he received what he had sought after so long, and from that day he ever afterwards dated his conversion.

Shortly after this, Owen entered upon his career as a preacher and author. His first publication, in 1642, on the Arminian controversy, led to his appointment to the living of Fordham, in Essex. Here he laboured with great success, and published a valuable work on the "Duties of Pastor and People";

but being compelled to leave, in consequence of the death of the sequestered incumbent and the appointment of another to the living, he was presented to Coggeshall by the Earl of Essex, on the call of the parishioners. The precise date of this removal is not known, but must have been somewhere about 1646. Previous to this, he had become a Congregationalist, and had avowed opinions respecting toleration similar to those of the Assembly Independents.

Respecting this change of views he gives us the following information. "Not long after,* I set myself seriously to inquire into the controversies then warmly agitated in these nations. Of the Congregational way I was not acquainted with any one person, minister or other; nor had I, to my knowledge, seen any more than *one* in my life. My acquaintance lay wholly with ministers and people of the presbyterian way. But sundry books being published on either side, I perused and compared them with the Scriptures and with one another, according as I received ability from God. After a general view of them, as was my manner in other controversies, I fixed on one to take under peculiar consideration, which seemed most methodically and strongly to maintain that which was contrary, as I thought, to my present persuasion. This was Mr. Cotton's book 'Of the Keys,'† the examination and confutation of which, merely for my own satisfaction, with what diligence and sincerity I was able, I engaged in. What progress I made in that undertaking I can manifest to any by the discourses on that sub-

* That is, not long after the publication of the "Duties of Pastor and People," in 1643—4.

† Published in England by Goodwin and Nye, in 1644.

ject, and animadversions on that book, yet abiding by me. In the pursuit and management of this work, quite beside and contrary to my expectation, at a time wherein I could expect nothing on that account but ruin in this world—without the knowledge, or advice of, or conference with, any one person of that judgment—I was prevailed on to receive those principles to which I had thought to have set myself in opposition. And indeed, this way of impartially examining all things by the word, comparing causes with causes, and things with things, laying aside all prejudiced respects to persons or present traditions, is a course that I would admonish all to beware of who would avoid the danger of being made Independents."*

Having embraced these views, Owen immediately acted upon them. Without resigning his living, he formed a church at Coggeshall on the principles of Congregational Independency,† and presided over it as pastor with great devotedness, until his services were required elsewhere. His connection with the army and its chiefs commenced at the period when Colchester, and subsequently all Essex, surrendered to the parliament. Fairfax made Coggeshall his head quarters, became acquainted with Owen, and induced him to become his chaplain. After this, Owen frequently preached before the army and the parliament,

* Review of the Nature of Schism, in reply to Cawdry, vol. xix. p. 274. Orme's Life of Owen, p. 56.

† This church survives to the present day. For a list of Owen's successors, see Orme's Life of Owen, pp. 407, 408. The last name in the list is that of "Mr. Algernon Wells." The Life of Owen was published in 1826. Since then, Mr. Wells became, in 1831, the secretary of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, and was succeeded at Coggeshall by Mr. John Kaye.

proceeded with Cromwell in his expedition to Ireland and Scotland, returned to Coggeshall for a brief season, was appointed first to the deanery of Christ-church, and afterwards to the vice-chancellorship of Oxford, survived the Restoration, and died, full of honours, in the sixty-seventh year of his age, in August, 1683. As a man, a Christian, a preacher, a controversialist, a theologian, he has scarcely ever been surpassed. Notwithstanding the prominent place he occupied in the doings of the commonwealth and protectorate, his character passed unscathed through the scandals of the Restoration period, and few men have left behind a more illustrious name.

These remarks do not apply to Hugh Peters, whose memory has been more subject to reproach than that of almost any man of this period, excepting Cromwell. Bishops Burnet and Kennet, Doctors Barwick and Grey, and writers of the same stamp, have heaped their abusive epithets and slanders upon his head, with so much effect that succeeding writers have caught their tone, and in most instances imitated their example. It is difficult to account for such malice, except on the principle that party spirit prompts to the indulgence of vindictive feelings against those who have become its victims. Hugh Peters was sacrificed at the Restoration to the vengeance of the royalists and episcopalians, and his memory has been sacrificed ever since to keep up a traditional justification of the deed of blood. It is not difficult to show that the charges brought against him were false. If only a tithe of them had been true, he would never have occupied those places of trust and confidence which he enjoyed for so long a period; neither would his name have been associated as it is with the most illustrious

warriors, statesmen, and divines of the Commonwealth period.

Born at Fowey, in Cornwall, in 1599, and descended from a "considerable" family, he was sent, at the early age of fourteen, to Cambridge University, where he took his degree as Master of Arts in 1621. On the death of his tutor, he repaired to London, where he was led to a knowledge of gospel truth. Having been ordained by Bishop Montaigne, he afterwards preached at different places in Essex and London, and was invited to become monthly lecturer at St. Sepulchre's. He retained his lectureship, with a salary of thirty pounds per annum, for some years, until his popularity attracted the notice of the prelatical party. So attractive was his preaching that he had as many as six or seven thousand hearers; and so successful that hundreds became converts to the faith of the gospel. This was more than Laud, then in his pride of power, could bear. At his instigation, Peters was apprehended and imprisoned. Several noblemen offered bail for his appearance, but it was refused. No articles of charge were brought against him. All that was sought by these high proceedings was to silence a man whose attractive and persuasive eloquence endangered the success of prelatical measures then on foot.* After being confined some time, he was released, on condition of leaving the kingdom.

Under this compulsion, Peters repaired to Rotter-

* Yet Burnet and Wood would have us believe that Peters was an "ecclesiastical" and "pulpit buffoon," who had learned his gesticulations and oratory at the play-house! If the parishioners of St. Sepulchre's were fond of mountebanks, it does not appear to us likely that Cromwell's soldiers were so easily tickled; and yet Peters became their chief favourite.

dam, where he gathered an Independent church, and laboured with great success. The famous Dr. Ames became his colleague and warm friend, and died in his arms. This circumstance is sufficient to refute a host of calumnies. But, besides this, he so far secured the esteem of the churches in Holland that, at a later period, when he went over to solicit subscriptions for the suffering Irish protestants, he procured from their liberality the large sum of thirty thousand pounds.

In 1635 he left Rotterdam for New England, at the urgent invitation of some English emigrants, and became associated with the celebrated Cotton in the pastorate of the church at Salem. His views at this time respecting the relation between the magistracy and religion were of the defective character already referred to in our notice of Roger Williams, and Peters became implicated in the injustice inflicted on that estimable man. But the circumstance of his connexion with Cotton and the Salem Congregationalists, and the important matters entrusted to his care by the colonists, are sufficient to vindicate his moral and religious character from the aspersions cast upon it.

After residing in Salem for seven years, he was deputed to England by the colonial court to "mediate for ease in customs and excise;" but, having arrived at the commencement of the civil war, when it was impossible to "compass his errand," he determined to remain in the mother country from which he had been driven by persecution, until the issue of the war should become apparent. At a later period he expressed his conviction that he erred in relinquishing his charge at Salem, but such regrets were natural in

the prospect of a scaffold that might have been avoided by remaining in New England; and, whatever his own views under trying circumstances, it does not become any second party to judge him for yielding to the natural promptings of the patriot in such exciting scenes as those to which his mission had accidentally introduced him.

From this period Peters was connected with the parliamentarians and the army. The "good Earl of Warwick" and the Earl of Essex were his patrons. Both Fairfax and Cromwell entrusted him with many affairs of importance between the army and the parliament. On several occasions his services were acknowledged by vote of the House of Commons. As a preacher he had unbounded popularity, both in the army and in the metropolis. He was associated with many of the chiefs of the Independent party in their public proceedings,—not merely with Cromwell, and Lambert, and Harrison, but with Goodwin and Owen; was one of the Committee of Tryers with Philip Nye; and to the last was both esteemed and trusted by his party. There is testimony in the State Paper Office, bearing the date of July 18th 1658, to his "great charity and goodness, in sermons, prayers, and exhortations, in visiting and relieving the sick and wounded," at Dunkirk, and "in profitably applying the singular talent God hath bestowed on him to the chief ends proper for our auditory." *

The part which Peters took in the trial and execution of Laud and Charles, has been grossly exaggerated. No doubt he approved of those measures, but in concert with many thousands besides. The stories

* Thurloe's State Papers, vii. 223. Brooks' Puritans, iii. 358.

respecting his inciting the soldiers to demand the king's death, and his being on the scaffold concealed under a mask at the time of the execution, with many others of a similar nature, are pure calumnies which could never be substantiated at his trial. His own testimony respecting such matters—testimony given in the immediate prospect of death, and when there was no motive for stating what was untrue—is worth more than all the assertions of his enemies. "I had access to the king," he writes, in a letter to his only daughter, "about my New England business. He used me civilly. I, in requital, offered my poor thoughts three times for his safety: I never had hand in contriving or acting his death, as I am scandalized; but the contrary to my mean power. I never was in any councils, or cabals, at any time; I hated it, and had no stowage for counsel; thinking all government should be open to all. I confess, I did what I did strenuously, though with a weak head, being overlaid with my own and other's troubles; never was angry with any of the king's party, nor with any of them for being so; thought the parliament authority lawful, but never studied it much; have not had my hand in any man's blood, but saved many in life and estate." *

After these facts, it is apparent that the judgment of party writers, respecting the character of Hugh Peters, has to be reversed. That he was faultless, it is not our intention to assert; nor was any one more ready than himself to admit his many imperfections. His

* "A Dying Father's Last Legacy to an only Child: or, Mr. Hugh Peters' Advice to his Daughter, written with his own hand, during his late imprisonment in the Tower of London, and given her a little before his death. 1660."

last legacy to his daughter is one of the most affecting records of that period, not merely on account of the circumstances in which it was written, and the pathetic advice it offers to an only child, from whom he was about to be removed by a violent death; but chiefly because of its humbling confessions of error and unworthiness, mingled with the most truthful and earnest asseverations of his innocence in respect to the many charges brought against him. *

We now turn from biographical details to those events which followed one another in strange and rapid succession after the death of Charles. The dreams of the republicans seemed to be assuming the form of reality. For a season all was the freshness and vigor of a new order of things. The kingly office and the House of Peers were both abolished, and the House of Commons, with an executive council of state, became supreme. This council was composed of the leading men of the day, with Bradshaw—who had pronounced sentence of death on the king—as president, and John Milton as secretary for foreign correspondence. The army, with Fairfax and Cromwell at its head, was in its most perfect state of discipline. The naval power of England, with Blake at the head of the fleet, and Vane of the administration, began to assume new lustre. The places of the twelve judges were filled by sternly upright men, with St. John as chief justice. The oaths of allegiance and supremacy were abolished, and a new one was adopted, called the Engagement, which required

* For further particulars respecting the life and character of Peters, see Brooks' Puritans, iii., 350—369; Hanbury, iii., 570—587.

all who took it to promise fidelity to the Commonwealth of England.

But in a short time this seemingly auspicious state of things began to be disturbed. Parliament was supreme, only because it was backed by military power. Instead of dissolving itself and appealing to the country, it began to recruit its broken numbers by re-admitting excluded and retired members, and by filling up vacant seats on its own responsibility. The representation was not reformed, although this had been a prominent object in the "Declaration of the Army," and the "Agreement of the People,"—documents that expressed the wishes of the main supporters of the recent movements. Besides this, the religious settlement of the nation was not attempted on correct principles. The ordinances in favour of presbyterianism remained in force; and although divested of all directly coercive power, the nominal ascendancy of that form of polity, under the peculiar circumstances of the nation, led to manifold evils. It is admitted, that very serious difficulties beset the parliament in legislating on the subject of religion; neither is there any ground for doubting the disinterested, and, on the whole, impartial manner in which it sought to act towards existing parties. So far from wreaking its vengeance upon the episcopalians, such of them as were not openly disaffected to the new government, were protected from injury; and provision was made out of the tithes for those who had been deprived. Even the suppressing the Book of Common Prayer was not without justification, seeing how its enforcement in previous years had made it an odious thing and a badge of royalism. And if popish ceremonies were forbidden, they were for-

bidden on political rather than sectarian grounds, while catholics were treated with more lenity than in any former period since the establishment of protestantism.

Still the error committed in this direction at this crisis was a grave one, and is difficult to account for. The majority of the members of parliament were in all probability presbyterians, or moderate episcopalians; but the leaders were Independents, and supported by a large body in the army. Probably, as is often the case under similar circumstances with a generous as well as triumphant party, the Independents were reluctant to take advantage of their success. They would not have their own system established; and although many of their most eminent members were opposed to all connexion between religion and the state, they did not as a party feel it prudent to attempt to undo what had been already done. The ascendancy granted by the parliamentary ordinances to the presbyterian system was in their opinion a nominal thing, that was scarcely worth contending against; and all that they greatly cared for was, to prevent any further encroachments which might make what at present was nominal, real and exclusive.

It may be questioned, whether an absolute separation between church and state could have been effected at this time. The state of parties was very peculiar. Episcopalians and presbyterians would alike have been shocked at a proposal of that nature, and Independents and baptists were not unanimous respecting the propriety of making it. The subject, practically considered, was a comparatively novel one with all parties, and even the most thorough separatists were scarcely prepared to say to what extent the

separation between things civil and religious should proceed. Thomas Goodwin, Nye, Bridge, and the Assembly Independents, would in all probability have opposed a religious settlement of the nation on modern anti-state-church principles. Burroughes wrote a little before his death in 1646, "as for subjection to the magistrate, there we are upon equal ground; if he will interpose, he may assist and second the sentence of judging even subverters of faith; of withdrawing communion from them in the one, as well as the sentence of giving men up to Satan in the other; and we must still be subject here to suffer what is inflicted, if we cannot do what is required. Only we do not go as far as some do in this one thing. Whereas they* lay a law upon the conscience of magistrates, that they are bound to assist with their power the decrees of the church,—taking cognizance only of the fact that they have decreed, not inquiring into the nature of the things,—we dare not lay any such bond upon the magistrate's conscience; but say that he is to assist the church both upon the knowledge of what the church hath done, and the knowledge of the nature of the thing. Seeing every private man hath this power, to be judge of his own act; it were a great misery upon those who have power over men, to be denied this power."† Nor was this Burroughes' opinion merely. In the next sentence he affirms it to be that of "all those brethren with whom I have occasion to converse." Greenhill also writes, in that portion of his commentary on Ezekiel, the preface to which is dated September 18th,

* That is, presbyterians.

† Irenicum, p. 44. Hanbury, iii. 111.

1649, or at the time to which our present statement refers:—"These things I speak, not to make way for licentiousness, that *whatever* opinions men hold, think, say, or practise, they may be free; but merely that consciences truly tender, may not be forced. It is one thing to restrain men's practices which are idolatrous, blasphemous, against pure worship, the power of godliness, and peace of the state; another, to force men to that their judgment and conscience are against. I pleaded not ever for a toleration of *all*, neither do, but only that those whose lives are holy, peaceable, and differ in judgment from others in *some* things, may not be forced to conform or depart."* Owen's views were of a similar nature. In his Essay on Toleration, annexed to his sermon on the occasion of Charles' execution, he concedes the right and duty of the magistrate to provide places of worship and means of support for a faithful ministry.† While such opinions prevailed amongst the Congregational Independents, it was not likely that the Independent party generally should attempt to alter the course of ecclesiastical legislation already adopted. Public opinion was not sufficiently enlightened to warrant any practical measures in such a direction.

There can be little doubt, however, that the defective policy of parliament in respect to these two things—the representation of the country, and ecclesiastical affairs—was the main cause of the disturbances which agitated and ultimately upset the commonwealth. Favouritism necessarily became the

* Greenhill's Ezekiel, Sherman's Edition, p. 278.

† Owen's Works, Vol. xv. p. 200. Orme's Life of Owen, p. 76.

order of the day. The state was only nominally a republic: real government was in the hands of a self-constituted few. Liberty of conscience was only nominally authorized: presbyterians and Independents divided between them the emoluments formerly conferred on the Anglican hierarchy. While many of the staunchest advocates of liberty became disgusted with the result of their attempts to enfranchise the nation, the royalists were encouraged to seek the recovery of those privileges and offices which they thought themselves as much entitled to as their present possessors. Thus continual occasion was afforded for agitation and strife.

The "levellers," or extreme republicans, were the earliest to show dissatisfaction, and from dissatisfaction proceeded to acts of violence which it required the strong hand of power to suppress.* The law of treason was made severely stringent, and thereby exasperated instead of pacifying such as were disaffected towards the parliament. Meanwhile both Scotland and Ireland declared for Charles the Second, and put themselves in a posture for offensive war, while royalists, presbyterians, and levellers were agitating for their respective objects at home.

It was evident whither the course of affairs was tending. Clouds portending storm and convulsion were fast gathering. Parliament was unable to cope with its many difficulties; and though tenacious of power, scarcely knew how to use it. The genius of Cromwell alone was equal to the emergency. Appointed to reduce Ireland, he performed his task with tremendous efficacy, leaving behind him a name of terror

* The levellers appear to have held sound views on many points; but were rash in seeking their accomplishment.

which remains to this day.* Then entering Scotland, he routed the covenanters at Dunbar, and occupied Glasgow and Edinburgh.† After this, leaving Monk to finish the conquest of Scotland, he terminated the reactionary war by the total defeat of the combined Scotch and royalist forces at Worcester, on the 3rd of September, 1651.‡ Thus in little more than two years the enemies of the Commonwealth were overthrown.

A reference here to the proceedings of Cromwell in Ireland and Scotland seems indispensable to a correct estimate of his character, the more especially as false or exaggerated statements have been published in almost all histories respecting them. Those writers who have designedly pourtrayed Cromwell as a hypocrite, have generally prepared the minds of their readers by enumerating the cruelties practised on the Irish, and the oppression exercised towards the Scotch by the victorious general. There is no truth in such enumeration.

The war in Ireland was decisive, and the garrisons which refused submission after repeated summons, were refused quarter; but such as were not in arms were invariably spared, and the innocent were always separated from the guilty. With a clear conscience, Cromwell could challenge his enemies on the spot to point out a single example of unnecessary severity or cruelty. "Give us an instance," he exclaims in his answer to the popish prelates and clergy, "of one man since my coming into Ireland, not in arms, massacred, des-

* For two differing estimates of the manner of Cromwell's proceedings in Ireland, see Carlyle, ii. p. 116—166; and Mackintosh, vol. vi. 141—146.

† Carlyle, ii. 170—334.

‡ Ibid, 335—337.

troyed, or banished; concerning the massacre or the destruction of whom justice hath not been done, or endeavoured to be done!"* The wonder is, that in so expeditious a war, so little blood should have been shed.

Towards Scotland Cromwell's behaviour was that of a merciful conqueror. There is nothing in any part of his proceedings to indicate a vindictive spirit. His attitude even while he had his foot upon the neck of the nation, was not that of a merciless tyrant, prepared to wreak his vengeance on the foe; but that of a forbearing victor, who felt regret at having been compelled to humble them. No blood was wantonly shed. No excess was indulged in by the successful army. So soon as the blow had proved decisive, clemency took the place of wrath; and while subordination to the authority of the Commonwealth was strictly enforced, every facility was afforded to the peaceable and obedient, in repairing their divisions and bettering their condition. Few

* Carlyle, ii. p. 135. Referring to the manifesto of the "Popish Prelates and Clergy," Carlyle has the following remarks, which may serve as one specimen out of many, of the manner in which these exaggerated statements vanish before the light of truth. "What perhaps will most strike the careless modern reader in the Clonmacnoise manifesto with its 'inferences' of general extermination, is that 'shew of clemency;' and the total absence of those 'many inhabitants' butchered at Drogheda lately: total absence of those; and also of the 'two hundred women in the market-place of Wexford,' who in modern times have even grown 'two hundred beautiful women,' (all young, and in their Sunday clothes for the occasion,) and figure still, in the Irish imagination, in a very horrid manner. . . . This circumstance, and still more what Cromwell himself says on the subject of 'massacring,' will strike the modern reader; and the 'two hundred women,' and some other things, I persuade myself, will profitably vanish from the market-place henceforth!"—Ibid, p. 119.

conquerors would have acted as Cromwell did, towards a nation which had behaved so treacherously, and in a time of so much peril, to the state of England.

Cromwell's proceedings in relation to religion are worthy of special notice. Though a conqueror, he violated no promises respecting the freedom of the people in matters of worship. Before the battle of Dunbar, he had promised them liberty of conscience, affirming that it was no part of his business "to hinder any of them from worshipping God in that way they —the honest people in Scotland—are satisfied in their consciences by the Word of God they ought, though different from us."* This promise was observed. In all his dispatches to the parliament of England, and in all his correspondence during this period, Cromwell shows the deepest interest in the welfare of the religious people, and his determination that their spiritual liberties should remain untouched.

It is impossible to read without emotion the concluding portion of his letter to the speaker of the House of Commons, the day after the famous battle itself. Though flushed with victory, he rises superior to any of the ordinary promptings of pride, and pursues his loftier aims with singleness of heart. "Since we came into Scotland," he writes, "it hath been our desire and longing to have avoided blood in this business; by reason that God hath a people here fearing his name, though deceived. And to that end have we offered much love unto such, in the bowels of Christ; and concerning the truth of our hearts therein, have we appealed unto the Lord. The ministers of Scotland have hindered the passage of these things to

* See Cromwell's letter to Lesley, from the camp at Pentland Hills, 14th August, 1650. Carlyle, ii, 191.

the hearts of those to whom we intended them. And now we hear, that not only the deceived people, but some of the ministers also, are fallen in this battle. This is the great hand of the Lord, and worthy of the consideration of all those who take into their hands the instruments of a foolish shepherd,—to wit, meddling with worldly policies, and mixtures of earthly power, to set up that which they call the kingdom of Christ, which is neither it, nor, if it were it, would such means be found effectual to that end,—and neglect, or trust not to, the Word of God, the sword of the Spirit, which is alone powerful and able for the setting up of that kingdom; and, when trusted to, will be found effectually able to that end, and will also do it. This is humbly offered for their sakes, who have lately too much turned aside; that they might return again to preach Jesus Christ, according to the simplicity of the gospel; and then no doubt they will discern and find your protection and encouragement."*

When Cromwell entered Edinburgh at the head of his army, the ministers of the kirk, who had so long been plotting against the Independents, and who had been the chief instruments in promoting the invasion of the Scotch army into England, now feared the worst. They left their parishes and fled for shelter to the castle, hoping to be safe under the protection of the governor. Before long they were compelled to march out—governor and all—and deliver up the fortress to the army. But previously Cromwell taught them how free he was from all vindictive feelings, and how desirous that they should return to better courses. He sent them a special invitation to re-

* Carlyle, ii. 218, 219.

pair to their respective parishes, and preach there, with a promise that they should "not in the least be molested." This was an act of generosity they could neither understand nor believe. They sent a "sulky" answer back, complaining of the persecution exercised by the Independents towards "the ministers of Christ in England and Ireland," charging his invasion of Scotland with injustice, and expressing their distrust of his promised protection. Cromwell's reply to their missive is a complete vindication of the Independents, and illustrates the views which their leaders entertained respecting the manner in which Christ's kingdom was to be advanced. We give it entire.

"FOR THE HONOURABLE THE GOVERNOR OF THE CASTLE OF EDINBURGH: THESE.

"Edinburgh, 9th September, 1650.

"Sir,—The kindness offered to the ministers with you was done with ingenuity;* thinking it might have met with the like: but I am satisfied to tell those with you, that if their Master's service (as they call it) were chiefly in their eye, imagination of suffering† would not have caused such a return;‡ much less would the practice of our Party,§ as they are pleased to say, upon the Ministers of Christ in England, have been an argument of personal persecution.

"The Ministers in England are supported, and have liberty to preach the Gospel; though not to rail, nor under any pretence thereof,|| to overtop the Civil Power, or debase it as they please. No man hath been

* That is, ingenuously. † Fear of personal damage.

‡ Such a reply to my kind offer.

§ The Independent party.

|| Of preaching the gospel.

troubled in England or Ireland for preaching the Gospel; nor has any man been molested in Scotland since the coming of the army hither. The speaking truth becomes the Ministers of Christ.*

"When Ministers pretend to a glorious Reformation; and lay the foundations thereof in getting to themselves worldly power; and can make worldly mixtures to accomplish the same, such as their late Agreement with their King; and hope by him to carry on their design, they may know that the Sion promised, will not be built with such untempered mortar.

"As for the unjust Invasion they mention, time was when an Army of Scotland came into England, not called by the Supreme Authority.† We have said, in our Papers, with what hearts, and upon what account, we came; and the Lord hath heard us,‡ though you would not, upon as solemn an appeal as any experience can parallel.§

"And although they seem to comfort themselves with being sons of Jacob, from whom they say God hath hid his face for a time; yet it's no wonder when the Lord hath lifted up His hand so eminently against a Family as he hath done so often against this,¶ and

* You know, that is, that your accusation about persecution from us is false.

† 1648. Duke Hamilton's time.

‡ Six days ago, at Dunbar.

§ Declaration of the army—designated by the Scotch, "army of sectaries and blasphemers,"—and Proclamation to the people of Scotland, as well as Cromwell's letter to the general assembly of the kirk of Scotland. All these were solemn appeals to the Scotch, to desist from war, and prevent thereby the effusion of blood, as well as the invasion of their country; but in vain.

¶ Of the Stuarts—Charles the First beheaded, and Charles the Second beaten everywhere.

men will not see His hand,—it's no wonder if the Lord hide his face from such; putting them to shame both for it and their hatred of his people; as it is this day. When they purely trust to the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, which is powerful to bring down strongholds and every imagination that exalts itself,—which alone is able to square and fit the stones for the new Jerusalem;—then, and not before, and by that means and no other, shall Jerusalem, the city of the Lord, which is to be the praise of the whole Earth, be built; the Sion of the Holy One of Israel.

"I have nothing to say to you but that I am,

"Sir,

"Your humble servant,

"Oliver Cromwell."

A few days after this, Cromwell wrote a longer letter, accusing the presbyterian ministers of intolerance towards all dissentients from their doctrine and polity, and justifying the officers of the army and others, who occupied the deserted presbyterian pulpits. "We look at Ministers," he writes, "as helpers of, not lords over, God's people. I appeal to their consciences,* whether any person trying their doctrines, and dissenting, shall not incur the censure of Sectary? And what is this but to deny Christians their liberty, and assume the Infallible Chair? What doth he whom we would not be likened unto† do more than this?" Again; "You say, you have just cause to regret that men of Civil employments should usurp the calling and employment of the Ministry, to the scandal of the Reformed Kirks.—Are you troubled that Christ is

* The consciences of the presbyterian ministers.

† The Pope.

preached? Is preaching so exclusively your function? Doth it scandalise the reformed kirks, and Scotland in particular? Is it against the Covenant? Away with the Covenant, if this be so! I thought the Covenant and these professors of it could have been willing that any should speak good of the name of Christ. if not, it is no Covenant of God's approving; nor are these kirks you mention, in so much the Spouse of Christ. Where do you find in the Scripture a ground to warrant such an assertion, That preaching is exclusively your function? Though an Approbation from men hath order in it, and may do well; yet he that hath no better warrant than that, hath none at all. I hope He that ascended up on high may give His gifts to whom he pleases: and if those gifts be the seal of Mission, be not envious though Eldad and Medad prophesy. You know who bids us 'covet earnestly the best gifts,' but chiefly 'that we may prophesy;' which the apostle explains there to be a speaking to instruction and edification and comfort,—which speaking, the instructed, the edified and comforted can best tell the energy and effect of. If such evidence be, I say again, take heed you envy not, for your own sakes; lest you be guilty of a greater fault than Moses reproved in Joshua for envying for his sake.—Indeed you err through mistaking of the Scriptures. Approbation* is an act of conveniency in respect of order; not of necessity, to give faculty to preach the gospel. Your pretended fear lest error should step in, is like the man who would keep all the wine out of the country lest men should be drunk. It will be found an unjust and unwise jealousy, to deprive a man of his natural

* That is, ordination.

liberty upon a supposition he may abuse it. When he doth abuse it, judge. If a man speak foolishly, ye suffer him gladly because ye are wise; if erroneously, the truth never appears by your conviction of him. Stop such a man's mouth by sound words which cannot be gainsayed. If he speak blasphemously, or to the disturbance of the public peace, let the civil magistrate punish him; if truly, rejoice in the truth. And if you will call our speakings together since we came into Scotland,—to provoke one another to love and good works, to faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and repentance from dead works; and to charity and love towards you, to pray and mourn for you, and for your bitter returns to our love of you, and your incredulity of our professions of love to you, of the truth of which we have made our solemn and humble appeals to the Lord our God, which he hath heard and borne witness to;—if you will call these things scandalous to the kirk, and against the covenant, because done by men of Civil callings,—we rejoice in them, notwithstanding what you say."*

These passages from Cromwell's correspondence are the more important, inasmuch as they convey the sentiments of the party of which he was the head. The principles they develop were those of the Independents, whether regular ministers, or officers in the army. It is not true to affirm that they made it an object to convert the presbyterians by the same weapons with which they had beaten their armies; but they were anxious, having taken possession of their country on lawful grounds, to teach them how they regarded their past acts of oppression towards all who

* Carlyle, ii. 238—240.

dissented from their presbyterian system, and how determined they were that all such oppressions should cease. The invasion of Scotland, therefore, although disastrous in a military point of view, was attended with most beneficial consequences. A religious liberty which had never been known before, followed in the wake of a military dictatorship. The gospel began to be preached with new fervor and unwonted success. The interval between the subjugation of Scotland by Cromwell and the Restoration, proved one of the most auspicious periods in the history of that nation. Not only were the people "kept in great order," the wild Highlanders "wonderfully tamed," and "vice suppressed and punished;" but "substantial justice was done," and "those eight years of usurpation" were afterwards regarded by Cromwell's enemies as a period of "great peace and prosperity." * Before that time there had been much of the form with little of the power of religion. With few exceptions the clergy were destitute of genuine piety, while the majority of the people had no religion at all. "Nine parts of ten" in their flocks, were "not sheep, not fit for civil, much less for spiritual privileges." †

Testimonies might be multiplied on this point, and that too not from enemies, but friends of the established kirk of Scotland. The testimony of Rutherford is explicit.—"Our work," he writes, "in public, was too much in sequestration of estates, fining and imprisoning, more than a compassionate mournfulness of spirit towards those whom we saw to oppose the work. In our assemblies we were more to set up a state opposite to a state; more upon forms, citations,

* Burnet's Own Time, Book I. Carlyle, II. 346, 347.

† Lockyer's "Little Stone out of the Mountain," 1652.

leading of witnesses, suspensions from benefices, than spiritually to persuade and work upon the conscience with the meekness and gentleness of Christ. The glory and royalty of our princely Redeemer and King was trampled on, as many might have seen in our assemblies. What way the army, and the sword, and the countenance of nobles and officers seemed to sway, that way were the censures carried. It had been better had there been more days of humiliation and fasting, and far less adjourning commissions, new peremptory summonses, and new drawn-up processes." *

Although Cromwell put down the assemblies, and curbed the spirit of intolerance which had been so long rampant, he interfered with none of the true rights of the church. The effect produced by his measures was soon apparent. "I remember well," says Burnet, "of three regiments coming to Aberdeen. There was an order and discipline, and a face of gravity and piety among them, that amazed all people. Most of them were Independents and Anabaptists: they were all gifted men, and preached as they were moved. But they never disturbed the public assemblies in the churches but once." "The power of the church was reduced within a narrower compass; for though it had liberty to excommunicate offenders, or debar them the communion, it might not seize their estates, or deprive them of their civil rights and privileges. No oaths or covenants were to be imposed, but by direction from Westminster; and as all fitting encouragement was to be given to ministers of the established church; so others, not satisfied

* Rutherford's "Testimony," &c., 1713.

with their form of church government, had liberty to serve God after their own manner. This occasioned a great commotion among the clergy, who complained of the loss of their covenant and church discipline; and exclaimed against toleration as opening a door to all kinds of error and heresy: but the English supported their friends against all opposition." *

Yet more explicit is the testimony of Kirkton, one of the ministers of the established church at Edinburgh. "They did indeed," he writes, "proclaim a sort of toleration to dissenters among protestants, but permitted the gospel to have its course, and presbyteries and synods to continue in the exercise of their powers; and all the time of their government, the gospel prospered not a little, but mightily. It is also true, that because the generality of Scottish ministers were for the king upon any terms, therefore they did not permit the General Assembly to sit. And in this I believe they did no bad office; for both the authority of that meeting was denied by the protesters, and the assembly seemed to be more set upon establishing themselves, than promoting religion. . . . Errors in some places affected some few; yet were all these losses inconsiderable in regard of the great success the word preached had in sanctifying the people of the nation. And I verily believe there were more souls converted to Christ in that short period of time, than in any season since the Reformation, though of triple its duration. Nor was there ever greater purity and plenty of the means of grace than was in their time. Ministers were painful, people were diligent; and if a man had seen one of their solemn communions,

* Neal, iv. 54; Orme's Life of Owen, pp. 99, 100.

where many congregations met in great multitudes; some dozen of ministers used to preach, and the people continued as it were in a kind of trance (so serious were they in spiritual exercises,) for three days at least, he would have thought it a solemnity unknown to the rest of the world. . . . At the king's return, every parish had a minister, every village had a school, every family almost had a Bible, yea, in most of the country all the children could read the scriptures, and were provided with Bibles, either by their parents or their ministers." * Facts like these, and so well authenticated, are sufficient to vindicate the character and conduct of the Independents in Scotland from all the aspersions of mere partizans, whether royalist or presbyterian. Fruits so excellent, could not come from a tree altogether corrupt.

It seems appropriate in this place to state a few particulars respecting the history of Independency in Scotland, from the time of Penry to this period. Little has reached us in the shape of well-authenticated fact respecting the results of Penry's mission in that country. And it is probable that in after periods,—in consequence of the oppression alternately exercised by the ruling English party on the one hand, and the presbyterians on the other,—there was little opportunity for the introduction, much less the advancement, of congregational principles in any of the districts of Scotland. The earliest account of any Independent movement after that period, relates to the year 1642, at the commencement of the Long Parliament. It appears, that at that time Othro Ferrendail, an Irishman, was in the habit of preach-

* Kirkton's History of the Church of Scotland, pp. 54, 55—64.

ing in several private houses in Aberdeen. He was in all probability a disciple of Ainsworth's, and had received the principles of Independency from him during his sojourn in Ireland, in an early period of the century.* On repairing to Scotland, he felt it his duty to advocate the views to which he was attached. This required no small courage, at a time when presbyterianism was exclusively predominant. Charles had just been repulsed by the Scotch army under Leslie, in his attempts to introduce episcopalianism; and it was not likely that, in the elation of a successful resistance against one form of innovation, the presbyterians would submit to another. One of the ministers of Aberdeen, of the name of Andrew Cant, either favoured or connived at Ferrendail's proceedings; and another, John Oswald, was thought "not to dislike them." How long he had been in the habit of preaching in this secret manner cannot be ascertained; but it would appear that a respectable number of individuals had gathered around him, and received the truth from his lips. William Maxwell, Thomas Pont, Gilbert Gordon of Tilliefroskie, and his whole family, together with John Ross, minister of Birse, are mentioned as persons who favoured his doctrine. They were accustomed to hold their meetings during the night. While others slept they met for worship and the preaching of the word. At length, Ferrendail was apprehended, and, together with several of his followers, complained of to the presbytery. No particulars of the trial have reached us. The result was, that

* It is difficult to say when Ainsworth was in Ireland; but Hornbeck states the fact. Summa Controversiarum, p. 740. See back, vol. II., p. 213.

Ferrendail subscribed the covenant, and was received as "a good bairn;" but, not satisfying the presbytery by his after proceedings, was referred to the General Assembly. In all probability he was imprisoned by that authority, together with Gordon of Tilliefroskie. Whether a church was formed on Independent principles, and if so, how long it survived, cannot now be ascertained.*

From this time to the invasion of Scotland by the English army, measures of the severest character were enforced against all who dissented from the presbyterian supremacy. In 1647, the General Assembly passed an act forbidding all parties to receive or sanction any persons infected with the errors of Independency and Anabaptism. Presbyteries and synods were commanded to institute proceedings against all such offenders, while civil magistrates were enjoined to cooperate in their apprehension and punishment. The act not only forbade the harbouring of persons, but the importation of books and pamphlets advocating principles to which the Assembly was so violently opposed. These persecuting proceedings in Scotland show what kind of results would have attended the establishment of presbyterianism in England, if Cromwell and the Independent party had not prevented the Westminster Assembly from carrying out its cherished project.

During the Commonwealth and Protectorate, a change was effected.† Besides the officers and troopers of the army, a considerable number of chaplains and regular ministers were engaged in preaching.

* Spalding's Hist. of the Troubles in Scotland, II., 45—102. Orme's Life of Owen, p. 404.

† Orme's Life of Owen, pp. 406, 407.

Owen, Caryl, John Oxenbridge, Cuthbert Sydenham, and Nicholas Lockyer, were amongst the more prominent. Lockyer published a small work, entitled, "A Little Stone out of the Mountain, or Church Order briefly opened, etc.," in 1652; which was answered by Wood, Theological Professor of St. Andrew's. The reply was entitled, "A Little Stone Pretended to be out of the Mountain, tried and found to be a Counterfeit, 1654." From this reply it would appear, that Lockyer's work had not been without its influence; since some parties, "ministers and others in Aberdeen," had renounced presbyterianism in favour of Independency. No extensive effect, however, was produced upon the Scotch people generally by the presence of the English Independents. Neither was this to be expected. Here and there thoughtful individuals might be induced to give a calm consideration to the controverted points on which the two parties divided; but by far the greater number would be prejudiced against a system associated in their minds with the idea of military invasion and usurpation. In 1652, the English commissioners presented to the General Assembly "A Declaration in favour of Congregational Discipline, the purity of Communion and Toleration;" to which, we are informed, the Assembly "replied rather indignantly." But the presbyterians were divided into two parties, known as the Resolutioners and the Protesters;* the latter of whom sympathised, in some respects, much more with the Independents than with their own party.

* This division became an open one in 1651, but had virtually existed long before. Sir J. Balfour's Works, IV. 143. "Nullity of the pretended Assembly at St. Andrew's and Dundee, etc., 1652." "Vindication, etc., of the late General Assembly, etc., 1652."

Patrick Gillespie, James Simpson, Samuel Rutherford, James Guthrie, Andrew Cant, John Oswald, and many others, were of the latter class. During the same period, the baptists appear to have gained a footing in Scotland, through the prevalence of their opinions in several of the regiments of the army. We do not find any churches of their order in any part of Scotland, excepting Leith and Edinburgh. One of their persuasion, of the name of Christian Blythe, is mentioned in connexion with Gordon of Tilliefroskie and others, as having been "excommunicated, imprisoned, banished, hunted from place to place, to the loss of all they had;" but no particulars are afforded respecting the extent to which baptist opinions prevailed in the country at large. During the latter years of the Protectorate, the presbyterians recovered some of their former power, and are complained of as having used it against dissenters from their system. This was under the administration of Monk, who, although occupying a place of authority in Scotland under Cromwell, was little interested in the protection of those for whom his superior had risked so much. With the Restoration a new order of things commenced, in which both Presbyterians and Independents found themselves a persecuted and scattered people.

During the same period Independency gained a temporary footing in Ireland, such as it had never obtained before. The disciples of the Brownists and their successors had never absolutely died out; but amidst the general corruption of succeeding times, and the persecutions both of catholics and episcopalians, they had never been able to augment their numbers. Like Ferrendail, they were watched and

kept at bay, and compelled in a great measure to keep the secret of their religious opinions in their own breasts, until the arrival of better times. Cromwell's expedition opened a way for gospel preachers and for the institution of congregational churches, of which many availed themselves. Owen took up his residence in Dublin during the greater portion of his service in Ireland, where "a numerous multitude" listened to him with great profit.* Hugh Peters was with the army, but only for a short time. Besides these there were many preachers of the truth, and in a short time congregational churches, baptist and pædobaptist, sprang up in many parts of the country.† Parliament passed an ordinance on the 8th of March, 1650, for the encouragement of religion and learning in Ireland, endowed the professors of Trinity College, erected another college and a free school, with suitable provisions, and sent over six acceptable ministers with proper maintenance. Under these encouragements both religion and learning revived; but as in all similar cases, where improper means are used for the promotion of good ends, the effects were not permanent.

During this period we find Samuel Winter,‡ Samuel Mather, Thomas Harrison,§ Stephen Char-

* Preface to Owen's Death of Christ. In his Sermon before Parliament, in February, 1650, Owen says, "I would there were, for the present, one gospel preacher for every walled town in the English possession in Ireland."

† Crosby's Baptists, III. 42, 43. Ivimey's Hist. of the Baptists, I. p. 240.

‡ Winter was made Provost of Trinity College; but deprived at the Restoration.

§ Harrison preached at Christchurch, and Mather at St. Nicholas.

nock,* John Rogers,† John Byewater, and Thomas Huggins, in Dublin; Thomas Patient,‡ in Waterford; John Murcot, in Cork; Joseph Eyres, in Youghall; Timothy Taylor, in Carrickfergus; Claudius Gilbert, and Edward Reynolds, in Limerick; and Jenner, in Tredagh. But besides these there were churches in Kilkenny, Wexford, Galloway, and other places. With the Restoration most of these churches were scattered, and a proof was afforded of the uncertainty of all religious movements, so long as civil authority is admitted to interfere in their promotion.

Returning from this digression to the course of affairs in England, the conduct of Cromwell in relation to the parliament—now known as the Rump parliament—claims our first notice. On no portion of the history of this period has a greater division of sentiment been expressed. Seldom has the whole truth been told by the writers of any party. It appears to have been the fate of Cromwell to be misunderstood by every one. Excepting Carlyle, no one seems to have had the capacity of measuring his motives and his policy, or of appreciating his position. But Carlyle has spoken the truth on this subject, just because he has attended to Cromwell's own account of the matter, which is one consistent whole; while every other account is either partial, or utterly false. In saying this we do not affirm that Cromwell was wholly

* Charnock was a great favourite with persons of eminence, and had always a distinguished audience.

† Rogers was the author of "The Tabernacle for the Sun"; Orme's Life of Owen, p. 88.

‡ Patient had been co-pastor with Kiffin, in London. Both he and Murcot were baptists.

in the right; but that he was sincere, and in the crisis at which the nation had arrived, sagacious and patriotic.

The facts of the case are these. Before the execution of the king, and the declaration of a commonwealth, parliament had pledged itself to reform the system of representation and appeal to the country.* This pledge was never redeemed. Instead of attempting to dissolve itself, it proceeded to legislate on all matters in the spirit of a permanent self-constituted oligarchy. During the absence of Cromwell and many of the Independent members in the wars of Ireland and Scotland, the remnant shaped out their measures according to their own personal interests, divided into parties, disregarded the ends of impartial justice, instituted courts of judicature by their own authority, and engrossed in a great measure the whole executive of the state. Presbyterianism, although to a great extent implicated in the troubles of Scotland, secured increasing favour at their hands, and had it not been for their fear of rousing the anger of the army and the navy, most of the officers of which were Independents, they would have given direct coercive power to the presbyteries by that time instituted in many parts of the kingdom.

Such was the condition of things when Cromwell returned to his seat in parliament after the battle of Worcester.† There was just matter of complaint. It was not a pleasing thing either to him or to those who had been spending their energies and risking their lives in the wars of Ireland and

* Commons Journals, 20th January, 1648-9: six weeks after Pride's Purge; ten days before the king's death.

† Cromwell resumed his seat, 16th of September, 1651.

Scotland, to find on their return, what they had frequently suspected in their seasons of leisure, that the authorities under which they had been acting, and in defence of which they had been fighting, were growing daily less capacitated for wielding the destinies of a great and victorious people, departing from their true functions as enlightened, disinterested, sagacious, legislators for the commonweal, and becoming mere partizan law-makers and placemen. One of his first acts therefore, on resuming his seat, was to remind the House of its promises. He requested them to pass a bill, fixing the dissolution of the parliament, specifying the number and qualification of those who should be chosen to form a new House, and determining the manner of election. But the House was reluctant to part with a power so long exercised, and was always prepared with fresh reasons against any hasty decision of so important a question. By way of seeming concession it determined in November, 1651, that it would dissolve itself in three years' time. Although this was anything but satisfactory to those who conceived that it had sat too long already, they were patient, and waited to see how it would act in the meantime. Month after month dragged slowly on. Little was done to remove abuses, or to prepare the way for a final settlement. Cromwell and his party began to feel uneasy at these dilatory proceedings. Again and again he urged the members, privately and publicly, to regard the wishes of the best portion of the nation. But all was in vain. The nest was well-feathered and warm, and its occupants would not think seriously of removing. In August, 1652, a petition from the officers of the army reminded the members of their neglected duties and promises and

coming from such parties, had the effect of arousing them in some small degree from their apathy. The question respecting dissolution and final settlement revived again; but with the former results.

Meanwhile Cromwell held frequent conferences with the members; endeavoured in an amicable manner to lead them to something definite in their views concerning the permanent settlement of the nation; and showed clearly that his design was to secure the fruits of past victories by the institution of a government favourable to liberty and order, without danger from the revival of the vanquished enemies of the nation. With many of the wisest men of the day he arrived at the conviction that a constitutional monarchy would prove the best form of government for the country; or at least that there should be something monarchical in it. That he was ambitious, and had already designed to turn usurper and tyrant, is morally impossible. His measures were too open and honest to admit of any such interpretation. He acted in fact as the head of a party that had already saved the nation from its worst foes more than once. The parliament, which should have acted only as a provisional one, thought of becoming a permanent oligarchy. Cromwell, who had been constituted by them the head of all the forces of the commonwealth, simply stepped in between them and their purpose, and prevented it.

On the 20th of April, 1653, just as the House was about to vote its own perpetuation, he dissolved it by force, and with the significant words,—"Depart, I say; and let us have done with you. In the name of God,—go!" It is said that as soon as the members had all vanished, Cromwell exclaimed, "I have sought

the Lord night and day, that he would rather slay me than put me upon the doing of this work."

It now remained for Cromwell, who had taken these decisive steps with the consent of the army and navy and the approval of the best part of the nation, to justify his conduct and call together a provisional parliament which should undertake to do what the long parliament had failed to do. On the following Friday, he sent forth the "Declaration of the Lord General and his Council of Officers," explanatory of his measures; and on the 30th of April, another Declaration, promising to call an assembly of "known persons, men fearing God, and of approved integrity." A new parliament was called in the name and by the summons of Cromwell, as "Captain General and Commander-in-Chief of all the Armies and Forces raised and to be raised within this Commonwealth."

A hundred and forty persons were summoned, "only two" of whom did not attend. Although this parliament obtained the nickname of *Barebones parliament*,* it was composed for the most part of "men of fortune and knowledge,"† whose integrity and piety were unimpeachable. It has been affirmed that the members were selected from those named, at the request of the council, by the *congregational churches* in the different countries.‡ If so, this parliament would appear to have been an Independent or Congregational parliament. Such however is scarcely a true repre-

* Barbones was "a man of piety, of understanding and weight; and even of considerable private capital, my witty flunkey friends!" says Carlyle, ii. 389.

† Whitelocke, p. 534.

‡ Headley's Cromwell, p. 362.

sentation of the facts of the case. These men were "got together" by "anxious consultation of the godly clergy," and "chief puritan lights in their respective countries," not without "much earnest revision, and solemn consideration in all kinds."* And here and there it is probable that congregations or churches, Independent and presbyterian, or intelligent and pious members of such churches, as well as their pastors, were consulted with as to the persons in their district or county most fitted by their known integrity and piety to serve in parliament. But this was the whole of their share in the business. The absolute election was in the hands of the Lord General and his council, whose only justification was that they were seeking a provisional assembly of honest men, by whom the affairs of the nation and the constitution of the state might be brought to a settlement.†

This parliament assembled on the 4th of July, 1653. About a hundred and twenty proceeded in a body to the council-chamber in Whitehall, where they were received by the Lord General and his council. The speech addressed to them on that occasion, is so important in relation to the crisis, that no history of the period would be complete without it. To read it with an impartial mind, is at once to comprehend the condition of the nation, and the motives and grounds of Cromwell's whole procedure. It is at

* Carlyle, ii. 388.

† For a list of the members, see Somers' Tracts, i. 216. Some were peers, some were founders of noble families—Montagues Howards, and Ashley Coopers; and many more were peers of nature, "faithful, loving truth, fearing God, and hating covetousness."

the same time a memorable specimen of the manner in which that great statesman as well as general could express himself on affairs of state, and will vindicate his memory from the manifold calumnies with which it has been assailed. To insert the whole would occupy too much of our space. We cannot, however, in justice to Cromwell and his party, withhold that portion which contains the materials of his justification before that and succeeding ages.

After an introductory reference to the early period of the civil war, and the signal success that had crowned the efforts of the armies and people of England, he proceeds as follows:—

"I shall now begin a little to remind you of the passages that have been transacted since Worcester. Coming from whence, with the rest of my fellow officers and soldiers, we did expect, and had some reasonable confidence our expectations would not be frustrated, that, having such an history to look back unto, such a God, so eminently visible, even our enemies confessing that 'God himself was certainly engaged against them, else they should never have been disappointed in *every* engagement,'—and that may be used by the way, that if we had but miscarried in the least,* all our former mercies were in danger to be lost:—I say, coming up then, we had some confidence that the mercies God had shewn, and the expectations which were upon our hearts, and upon the hearts of all good men, would have prompted those who were in authority to do those good things which might, by honest men, have been judged fit for such a God, and worthy of

* That is, lost but one battle.

such mercies; and indeed been a discharge of duty from those to whom all these mercies had been shown, for the true interest of this nation! If I should now labour to be particular in enumerating how businesses have been transacted from that time to the dissolution of the late parliament, indeed I should be upon a theme which would be troublesome to myself. For I think I may say for myself and my fellow officers, that we have rather desired and studied healing and looking-forward, than to rake into sores and to look backward,—to give things forth in those colours that would not be very pleasing to any good eye to look upon. Only this we shall say for our own vindication, as pointing out the ground for that unavoidable necessity, nay, even that duty that was incumbent upon us, to make this last great change—I think it will not be amiss to offer a word or two to that. As I said before, we are loath to rake into businesses, were there not a necessity so to do.

"Indeed we may say that, ever since the coming up of myself and those gentlemen who have been engaged in the military part, it hath been full in our hearts and thoughts, to desire and use all the fair and lawful means we could, to have the nation reap the fruit of all the blood and treasure that had been spent in this cause: and we have had many desires, and thirstings in our spirits, to find out ways and means wherein we might be anywise instrumental to help it forward. We were very tender, for a long time, so much as to petition. For some of the officers being members, and others having very good acquaintance with, and some relations to, divers members of parliament,—we did, from time to time, solicit such; thinking if there had been nobody to prompt them, nor call

upon them, these things might have been attended to, from ingenuity * and integrity in those that had it in their power to answer such expectations.

"Truly when we say nothing would be done, we did as we thought according to our duty, a little, to remind them by a petition, which I suppose you have seen; it was delivered, as I remember, in August last. What effect that had, is likewise very well known. The truth is, we had no return at all for our satisfaction,—a few words given us; the things presented by us, or the most of them, we were told 'were under consideration:' and those not presented by us had very little or no consideration at all. Finding the people dissatisfied in every corner of the nation, and all men laying at our doors the non-performance of these things which had been promised, and were of duty to be performed,—truly we did then think ourselves concerned, if we would (as becomes honest men) keep up the reputation of honest men in the world. And therefore we, divers times, endeavoured to obtain meetings with divers members of parliament; and we did not begin those till about October last. And in these meetings we did with all faithfulness and sincerity, beseech them that they would be mindful of their duty to God and man, in the discharge of the trust reposed in them. I believe (as there are many gentlemen here know), we had at least ten or twelve meetings, most humbly begging and beseeching of them, that by their own means they would bring forth those good things which had been promised and expected; that so it might appear they did not do them by any suggestion

* Ingenuousness,

from the army, but from their own ingenuity: so tender were we to preserve them in the reputation of the people. Having had very many of those meetings; and declaring plainly that the issue would be the displeasure and judgment of God, the dissatisfaction of the people, the putting of all things into a confusion: yet how little we prevailed, we very well know, and we believe it's not unknown to you.

"At last, when indeed we saw things would not be laid to heart, we had a very serious consideration among ourselves what other ways to have recourse unto; and when we grew to more closer considerations, then they (the parliament men) began to take the act for a representative* to heart, and seemed exceeding willing to put it on. And had it been done with integrity, there could nothing have happened more welcome to our judgments than that. But plainly the intention was, not to give the people a right of choice; it would have been but a seeming right: that semblance of giving them a choice was only to recruit the house, the better to perpetuate *themselves*. And truly, having been divers of us, spoken unto to give way hereunto, to which we made perpetual aversions, indeed abominating the thoughts of it, we declared our judgments against it, and our dissatisfaction with it. And yet they that would not hear of a representative formerly, when it lay three years before them, without proceeding one line, or making any considerable progress,—I say, those that would not hear of this bill formerly, did now, when they saw us falling into more closer considerations, make, instead of protracting their bill, as much prepos-

* For a New Parliament and method of election.

terous haste with it on the other side, and run into that opposite extremity.

"Finding that this spirit was not according to God; and that the whole weight of this cause,—which must needs be very dear unto us who had so often adventured our lives for it, and we believe it was so to you,—did hang upon the business now in hand; and seeing plainly that there was not here any consideration to assert this cause, or provide security for *it*, but only to cross the troublesome people of the army, who by this time were high enough in their displeasures: truly, I say, when we saw all this, having power in our hands, we could not resolve to let such monstrous proceedings go on, and so to throw away all our liberties into the hands of those whom we had fought against; we came, first, to this conclusion among ourselves, that if we had been *fought* out of our liberties and rights, necessity would have taught us patience; but that to deliver them sluggishly up would render us the basest persons in the world, and worthy to be accounted haters of God and of his people. When it pleased God to lay this close to our hearts; and indeed to show us that the interest of his people was grown cheap, that *it* was not at all laid to heart, but that if things came to real competition, his cause even among ourselves would also in every point go to the ground: indeed this did add more considerations to us, That there was a duty incumbent upon us. And,—I speak here, in the presence of some that were at the closure of our consultations, and as before the Lord,—the thinking of an act of violence was to us worse than any battle that ever we were in, or that could be to the utmost hazard of our lives: so willing were we, even very tender

and desirous if possible that these men might quit their places with honour.

"I am the longer upon this; because it hath been in our hearts and consciences, justifying us, and hath never been yet thoroughly imparted to any; and we had rather begin with you than have done it before; and do think indeed that this transaction is more proper for a verbal communication than to have it put into writing. I doubt, he whose pen is most gentle in England, would, in recording that, have been tempted, whether he would or no, to dip it deep in anger and wrath. But affairs being at this posture; we seeing plainly even in some critical cases, that the cause of the people of God was a despised thing; truly we did believe then that the hands of other men than these, must be the hands to be used for the work. And we thought then, it was very high time to look about us, and to be sensible of *our* duty.

"If, I say, I should take up your time to tell you what instances we have to satisfy our judgments and consciences, that these are not vain imaginations, nor things fictitious, but which fell within the compass of our own certain knowledge, it would bring me, I say, to what I would avoid, to rake into these things too much. Only this. If anybody was in competition for any place of real and signal trust, if any really public interest was at stake in that parliament, how hard and difficult a matter was it to get anything carried without making parties,—without practices indeed unworthy of a parliament! When things must be carried so in a supreme authority, indeed I think it is not as it ought to be, to say no worse! Then, when we came to other trials, as in that case of Wales, (of establishing a preaching ministry in Wales,) which,

I must confess for my own part, I set myself upon,—if I should relate what discountenance that business of the poor people of God there had, (who had men watching over them like so many wolves, ready to catch the lambs so soon as they were brought forth into the world); how signally that business was trodden under foot in parliament to the discountenancing of the honest people, and the countenancing of the malignant party, of this commonwealth!—I need but say it was so. For many of you know, and by sad experience have felt it to be so. And somebody, I hope, will, at leisure, better impart to you the state of that business of Wales; which really, to myself and officers, was as plain a trial of their spirits (the parliament's) as anything, it being known to many of us that God had kindled a seed there, indeed hardly to be paralleled since the primitive time.

"I would these had been all the instances we had! Finding, however, which way the spirits of men went, finding that good was never intended to the people of God,—I mean, when I say the people of God, I mean the *large* comprehension of them, under the several forms of godliness in this nation;—finding, I say, that all tenderness was forgotten to the good people, (though it was by *their* hands and their means, under the blessing of God, that *those* sat where they did),—we thought this a very bad requital! I will not say, they were come to an utter inability of working reformation; though I might say so in regard to one thing: the reformation of the law, so much groaned under in the posture it now is in. That was a thing we had many good words spoken for; but we know that many months together were not enough for the settling of one word,—'incumbrances,—' I say, finding that this

was the spirit and complexion of men,—although these were faults for which no man should lift up his hand against the superior magistrate; not simply for these faults and failings,—yet when we saw that this new representative of theirs was meant to perpetuate men of such spirits; nay, when we had it from their own mouths, that they could not endure to hear of the dissolution of this parliament; we thought this an high breach of trust. If they had been a parliament, never violence was upon,* sitting as free and clear as any in former ages, it was thought, this to be a breach of trust, such as a greater could not be.

"And that we might not be in doubt about these matters; having had that conference among ourselves which I gave you an account of, we did desire one more,—and indeed it was the night before the dissolution: it had been desired two or three nights before; we did desire that we might speak with some of the principal persons of the house. That we might with ingenuity open our hearts to them; that we might either be convinced of the certainty of their intentions, or else that they would be pleased to hear our expedients, to prevent these inconveniences. And, indeed, we could not attain our desire till the night before the dissolution. There is a touch of this in our declaration.† As I said before, at that time we had often desired it, and at that time we obtained it; where about twenty of them were, none of the least in consideration for their interest and ability; with whom we desired some discourse upon these

* That is, had no Pride's Purge, nor Apprentice-riot come upon them.

† Of April 22nd.

things; and had it. And it pleased these gentlemen, who are here, the officers of the army, to desire me to offer their sense for them, which I did, and it was shortly thus: We told them 'the reason of our desire to wait upon them now was, that we might know from them what security lay in their manner of proceeding, so hastened, for a new representative; wherein they had made a few qualifications, such as they were: and how the whole business would, in actual practise, be executed: of which we had as yet no account; and yet we had our interest, our lives, estates, and families therein concerned; and we thought likewise, the honest people had interest in us. (How all this was to be?) That so, if it did seem they meant to appear in such honest and just ways as might be security to the honest interest, we might therein acquiesce: or else that they would hear what we had to offer.' Indeed, when this desire was made, the answer was, 'That nothing would do good for this nation, but the continuance of this Parliament!' We wondered we should have such a return. We said little to that: but seeing they would not give us satisfaction that their ways were honourable and just, we craved their leave to make our objections. We then told them, That the way they were going in would be impracticable. That we could not tell how to send out an Act, with such qualifications as to be a rule for electing and for being elected, Until we first knew who the persons were that should be admitted to elect. And above all, Whether any of the qualifications reached the Presbytery.* And we were bold to tell them, That

* Reached so far as to include the presbyterian party.

none of that judgment who had deserted this Cause and Interest should have any power therein.* We did think we should possess it. That we had as good deliver up our Cause into the hands of any as into the hands of those who had deserted us, or who were as neuters! For it's one thing to love a brother, to bear with and love a person of different judgment in matters of religion; and another thing to have any body so far set in the saddle on that account, as to have all the rest of his brethren at mercy.†

"Truly, Gentlemen, having this discourse concerning the impracticableness of the thing, the bringing-in of neuters, and such as had deserted this Cause, whom we very well know; objecting likewise how dangerous it would be by drawing concourses of people in the several Counties (every person that was within the qualification or without); and how it did fall obvious to us that the power would come into the hands of men who had very little affection to this Cause: the answer again was made, and that by very eminent persons, 'That nothing would save the Nation but the continuance of this Parliament.' This being so, we humbly proposed,—since neither our counsels, our objections to their way of proceeding, nor their answers to justify that, did give us satisfaction; nor did we think they ever intended to give us any, which indeed some of them have since declared to be the fact,—we proposed to them, I say, *our* expedient; which was indeed this: That the Government of the Nation being in such a condition as we

* None of those presbyterians who had joined the royalists, and instigated to the invasion of England.

† In other words, false pleas of religious equality and brotherhood shall not deceive us.

saw, and things being under so much ill sense abroad, and likely to end in confusion if we so proceeded,—we desired they would devolve the trust over to some well-affected men, such as had an interest in the Nation, and were known to be of good affection to the Commonwealth. Which, we told them, was no new thing when this Land was under the like hurly-burlies. And we had been labouring to get precedents to convince them of it; and it was confessed by them it had been no new thing. This expedient we offered out of the deep sense we had of the Cause of Christ, and were answered so as I told you, That nothing would save this Nation but the Continuance of that Parliament. They would not say the *perpetuating* of it at this time; yet we found their endeavours did directly tend that way: they gave us this answer, 'That the thing we offered was of a very high nature, and of tender consideration: how would money be raised?' and made some other objections. We told them how; and that we here offered an expedient five times better than that of theirs, for which no reason was given, nor, we thought, could be given;—and desired them that they would lay things seriously to heart! They told us, They would take time for the consideration of these things till to-morrow; they would sleep upon them, and consult some friends: 'some friends,' —though, as I said, there were about Twenty-three of them here, and not above Fifty-three in the House. And at parting, two or three of the chief of them, one of the chief,* and two or three more, did tell us, That they would endeavour to suspend further proceedings about their Bill for a New Representative until they

* Sir Harry Vane?

had another conference with us. And upon this we had great satisfaction; and had hope, if our expedient could receive a loving debate, that the next day we should have some such issue thereof as would give satisfaction to all. And herewith they went away, it being late at night.

"The next morning, we considering how to order what we had farther to offer to them in the evening, word was brought us that the House was proceeding with all speed upon the new Representative! We could not believe it, that such persons would be so unworthy; we remained there till a second and a third messenger came, with tidings That the House was really upon that business, and had brought it near to the issue,—and with that height* as was never before exercised; leaving out all things relating to the due exercise of the qualifications (which had appeared all along in it till now); and meaning, as we heard, to pass it only on paper, without engrossing, for the quicker despatch of it.—Thus, as we apprehended, would the Liberties of the Nation have been thrown away into the hands of those who had never fought for it. And upon this we thought it our duty not to suffer it. And upon this the House was dissolved, even when the Speaker was going to put the last question.

"I have too much troubled you with this: but we have made this relation, that you might know that what hath been done in the Dissolution of the Parliament was as necessary to be done as the preservation of this cause. And the necessity which led us to do that, hath brought us to this present issue, of exercising an extraordinary way and course, to draw you

* Determined spirit.

together here; upon this account, that you are men who know the Lord, and have made observations of His marvellous Dispensations; and may be trusted, as far as men may be trusted, with this Cause.

"It remains now for me to acquaint you a little farther with what relates to your taking upon you this great business. But indeed that is contained in the Paper here in my hand, which will be offered presently to you to read.* But having done that we have done † upon such ground of necessity as we have now declared, which was not a feigned necessity, but a real,—it did behove us, to the end we might manifest to the world the singleness of our hearts and our integrity who did these things, not to grasp at the power ourselves, or keep it in military hands, no, not for a day; but as far as God enabled us with strength and ability to put it into the hands of Proper Persons that might be called from the several parts of the Nation. This necessity; and I hope we may say for ourselves, this integrity of concluding to divest the Sword of all Power in the Civil Administration,—hath been that that hath moved us to put You to this trouble:‡ and having done that, truly we think we cannot, with the discharge of our own consciences, but offer somewhat to you on the devolving of the burden on your shoulders. It hath been the practice of others who have, voluntarily and out of a sense of duty, divested themselves, and devolved the Government into new hands; I say, it hath been the practice of those that have done so; it hath been practised, and is very consonant to reason, To lay down, together with their Authority, some

* The indenture, or instrument of government.

† Having dissolved the last parliament.

‡ The trouble of coming hither as a parliament.

charge how to employ it (as we hope we have done), and to press the duty of employing it well: concerning which we have a word or two to offer you.

"Truly God hath called you to this Work by, I think, as wonderful providences as ever passed upon the sons of men in so short a time. And truly, I think, taking the argument of necessity, for the Government must not *fall*; taking the appearance of the hand of God in this thing,—I think you would have been loath it should have been resigned into the hands of wicked men and enemies! I am sure, God would not have it so. It's come, therefore, to you by the way of necessity; by the way of the wise Providence of God,—through weak hands. And therefore, I think, coming through our hands, though such as we are, it may not be ill taken if we do offer somewhat (as I said before) as to the discharge of the Trust which is now incumbent upon you. And although I seem to speak of that which may have the face and interpretation of a charge, it's a very humble one: and if he that means to be a servant to you, who hath now called you to the exercise of the supreme Authority, discharge what he conceives to be a duty to you, we hope you will take it in good part.*"

From this time Cromwell was virtually supreme ruler in England. Parliament after parliament was called together by his authority. In August, 1653, he was declared Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Ireland, and Scotland, with his powers of government defined and limited. The instrument by which he was to be guided, contained forty-two articles. This new constitution provided that

* Carlyle, ii. 394—407.

"the supreme legislative authority should be in one person, and the People in Parliament represented; and that person be Lord-Protector." He was to be assisted by a council of state, of not more than twenty-one, and not less than thirteen persons. He was to have control of all the land and sea forces, and the granting of all commissions, promotions, and honours. He could not repeal or alter any law, without the consent of parliament. This parliament was to represent the nation on a principle of proportion to the taxation; was to be composed of four hundred members; to be assembled at least once in three years; and to sit at least five months.

No question is more difficult to determine than that which relates to the origin and ground of national government. Generally speaking, while rulers maintain their authority and accomplish the ends of justice few are disposed to pry inquisitively into the foundations of their supremacy. In the present instance, the overthrow of an hereditary monarchy, and the attempted institution of a republic, prepared the minds of men in an unusual degree to ask questions and entertain suspicions respecting the right of any person to govern. Nor are we aware of any theory according to which any parties whatsoever could have consistently assumed the management of affairs at this crisis. To restore the Stuarts would have been an act of folly for which the country was not yet prepared; neither was the conduct of Charles the Second such as to afford much hope respecting the future. The state of parties was such, that the establishment of a pure republic was quite out of the question. The only practical thing that remained was what Cromwell attempted to bring about, namely, the insti-

tution of a representative system, with the supreme authority in his own hands.

Many writers have insisted upon the hypocrisy of Cromwell in these proceedings. Without stating when he began to play the hypocrite, they have endeavoured to substantiate the charge by a reference to his various acts. A few words are called for on this subject.

It is admitted, that until a proper view is taken of the man and the circumstances in which he was placed, many things in the latter part of his life require explanation. We shall refer in another place to his religious policy, which, although based on imperfect principles, was incomparably superior to that of preceding or succeeding legislators. Our present concessions relate to his civil administration alone, in which there appears to have been an unnecessary degree of severity and arbitrariness. The institution of the major generals, in 1655, for example, placed the whole country under a species of military despotism. England and Wales were divided into twelve districts, over each of which a major general was appointed at the head of the militia, who were quartered in their various subdivisions in all towns supposed to be disaffected. These officers had unlimited power to suppress tumults and conspiracies, and to enforce the various ordinances and laws affecting the religion and morality of the people. From their decisions there was no appeal, except to the Protector himself. It is also admitted, that in seasons of insurrection and public excitement, Cromwell proceeded with a high hand to rectify the disorder. He showed no respect to persons. Whether Englishmen or foreigners, royalist or republican, officers of the army or civilians,

religious or irreligious, strangers or his own relatives, it was all the same, if they offended against existing laws. His decisions had all the impartiality of the incorruptible judge, and their execution was attended by a promptitude inevitable as destiny.

But after these admissions the inference does not appear conclusive that Cromwell was either usurper or hypocrite. The utmost sincerity is not incompatible with the utmost rigour. Perfectly pure motives may sometimes lead to the most daring enterprises. The hollow-hearted and time-serving follow the multitude, whether to do good or evil; while men of principle follow their own aims, as beings who are responsible to a higher power. Before Cromwell can be pronounced a hypocrite—and if a hypocrite at all, he was the most systematic the world has ever seen—it should be indisputably proved that his ultimate designs were selfish and corrupt. But the reverse of this is the fact. When he had acquired supreme power, he retained all the integrity both of his private and public character. He never threw off the mask which, according to the supposition, he must have assumed at some period or other, for the purpose of effecting his sinister aims. When three kingdoms were under his feet he was the same man as in those days when, according to his calumniators, he cajoled his troopers at Marston Moor and Naseby with an affectation of puritanic piety. He was never intemperate or licentious. When there was no more need, according to the assumption, to disguise his true nature, he appeared in the same character as before. Neither Hampton Court nor Whitehall bore witness to his revelries; nor could his most virulent accusers complain of the expensive pleasures and dissolute manners of his court. In his

speeches to his several parliaments, his remarkable references to the word of God indicated the habitual current of his thoughts. The manner in which he handled Scripture proves—to any person accustomed to investigate such matters—that the Bible was not reserved for study only by way of preparation for state occasions. His last speech of all is replete with singular quotation and felicitous allusion. Surely this might have been dispensed with when he had gained the ends of his ambition, if it be true that he was prompted by ambition to assume for a season the hypocrite's disguise.

It is confessed that to the very last his government was despotic, rather than constitutional. He relied upon his own personal direction and control, rather than upon the parliament or people. Yet it is apparent from the manner in which he called together successive parliaments, as well as from his attempt to create a House of Lords, that he had it continually in his heart to introduce a constitutional government into the country. From the time of dismissing the Rump Parliament to his death, this object was ever before him. He was prepared to yield his powers to the Barebones Parliament, and would have done so, if they had been sagacious enough to have discovered a mode of settling the affairs of the nation. Such was the state of things that this could not be accomplished.* The nation was torn by factions, civil and religious, royalist, republican, and ecclesiastical. No sooner was the strong hand of power withdrawn, than all the original disorders of the state revived, and

* This parliament attempted noble things; but restored its powers to Cromwell on finding that it was impossible to legislate with satisfaction on the religious question.

Cromwell was under continual necessity of resuming that authority by which alone the nation could be kept in a state of peace.

In 1657, it was proposed by parliament that Cromwell should assume the title of king, and a bill was proposed for his acceptance to that effect There was nothing in his principles that would have rendered it inconsistent in him to accept the kingship; and the probability is, that if he had deemed it essential to the peace of the country, he would have embraced the offer without hesitation. After much consideration he rejected the overture, and was confirmed in the title of Lord Protector, with power to name his successor.* The constitution of government accepted by him at the hands of parliament, provided one important security for the public liberty —the exclusive jurisdiction of the parliament over its privileges and numbers. On the 26th of June, 1657, amidst much imposing ceremonial, he was installed Lord Protector, in Westminster Hall. The Speaker presented him with the sceptre, a Bible, a purple robe, and a sword of state. A herald proclaimed him in due form. The trumpets sounded; and the great multitude of the people shouted, "God save the Lord Protector!"

The power of England was becoming consolidated both at home and abroad, and the prospect of a satisfactory settlement of the country under a constitutional government was drawing nearer, when Crom-

* In rejecting the title of king, Cromwell showed great deference to the opinion of the officers of the army, and the republican leaders. Some have designated this a weakness on his part. If so, it was a noble weakness, to respect the wishes of some of the bravest and best men in the nation.

well died. Domestic affliction and bereavement produced more effect upon his vigorous frame than all the shocks he had sustained in the wars and troubles of the Commonwealth.* He neglected the public business and his own infirmities to attend the deathbed of his favourite daughter, Lady Claypole. Day after day, night after night, he ministered to her comfort. On her decease,† his own health gave way. After attending her remains to Westminster Abbey, he returned to Hampton Court. His disease became more and more aggravated, and, by the advice of his physicians, he returned to London. After a long period of suffering, he expired, at two in the afternoon of the third of September, the anniversary of his two most famous victories, Dunbar and Worcester.

Various conflicting testimonies have been handed down to us respecting the dying experience of this remarkable man, not a tithe of which is to be depended upon. Slander and calumny followed him to his grave; but the truth is capable of being sifted from the falsehood. There was nothing in his dying testimony in any way inconsistent with his living professions. The remorse of the hypocrite never touched his spirit. Under the influence of alternating fever and chill, he was frequently delirious; but in the intervals of reason his great soul was calm and collected.

On one of these occasions he requested the chaplain —either Howe or Goodwin—to read from the epistle of Paul to the Philippians the passage beginning, "Not

* First his mother's death, in 1656, and later that of his friend, the Earl of Warwick, to whom he addressed so many affecting letters.

† August 6th, 1658.

that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. . . . I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me." Here Cromwell interrupted him, in broken accents: "This Scripture did once save my life, when my eldest son died, which went like a dagger to my heart—indeed it did." On the verge of the eternal world, he renewed his heart-broken grief over a brave son, cut down in the morning of life by his side, and, with his grief, the consolation that had sustained him.

In the intervals of suffering he spoke incessantly and earnestly of the goodness of God, and offered up many prayers for himself and for God's people. The following is a specimen of his humble intercession: "Lord, though I am a miserable and wretched creature, I am in covenant with Thee through grace. And I may, I will, come to Thee for Thy people. Thou hast made me, though very unworthy, a mean instrument to do them some good, and Thee Service; and many of them have set too high a value upon me, though others wish and would be glad of my death. Lord, however thou dost dispose of me, continue and go on to do good for them. Pardon thy foolish people! Forgive their sins, and do not forsake them, but love and bless them. Give them consistency of judgment, one heart, and mutual love; and go on to deliver them, and with the work of reformation; and make the name of Christ glorious in the world. Teach those who look too much on Thy Instruments, to depend more upon Thyself. Pardon such as desire to trample upon the dust of a poor worm; for they are Thy people too. And pardon the folly of this short prayer, and give me rest, for Jesus Christ's sake, to whom, with Thee

and Thy Holy Spirit, be all honour and glory, now and for ever! Amen." *

A short time before his death, a violent tempest burst over London. The large trees in St. James's Park were torn up by the roots. The chambers of Whitehall re-echoed with the roar of the wind. Nature seemed to sympathise with the mortal struggle. As the poet Waller expressed it:—

> "Nature herself took notice of his death,
> And, sighing, swelled the sea with such a breath,
> That to remotest shores her billows rolled,
> The approaching fate of their great ruler told."

The decease of this great ruler created consternation and astonishment inexpressible. "I am not able to speak or write," said Thurloe; "this stroke is so sore, so unexpected, the providence of God in it so stupendous, considering the person that has fallen, the time and season wherein God took him away, with other circumstances, I can do nothing but put my mouth in the dust and say, It is the Lord. It is not to be said what affection the army and people showed to his late Highness: his name is already precious. Never was there any man so prayed for." The sovereigns of Europe went into mourning for him. His funeral was most magnificent. The embalmed body lay in state for two months in Somerset House. But more significant than all were the truthful words placed over his coffin,—"He died with great assurance and serenity of soul."

The protectorate of Cromwell, although a comparatively brief period, was on the whole the most important period of our British history. The influence it has

* Carlyle iii. 457. Thurloe, vii. 375. Headley's Cromwell, p. 425.

had on the destinies of England cannot be over-rated: the influence it is still to exert may be better conceived than described. Making allowance for the peculiar circumstances in which Cromwell rose to supreme power, it may safely be affirmed that there never was so great a ruler. His aims were of the loftiest, and, to a great degree, the means he employed in seeking their accomplishment were of the most suitable kind. He desired to see the nation settled in the enjoyment of the utmost amount of liberty compatible with order. He sought to reform abuses, to arrest the march of injustice and immorality, and to diffuse amongst all classes the blessings of religion. He would have the nation respected abroad by the operation of self-respect at home; and the name of Englishmen invested with all the potency of the old Roman name.* To a great extent he was successful, —considering the condition in which he found the country, to a much greater extent than might have been expected. The unruly passions of the multitude

* Never was England more respected abroad than during Cromwell's administration. While Blake became master of the seas, and cleared the Mediterranean of pirates, both France and Spain courted an alliance with the Protector. When the Vaudois were persecuted in 1655, Cromwell refused to close a treaty then pending with France, until Mazarin had promised to cause it to cease. When remonstrated with, that France could not meddle with the affairs of Savoy, he declared that he would engage in war with France and the whole world if necessary; but that this persecution should cease. "I will sail my ships over the Alps, to Civita Vecchia, and make the sound of my cannon heard in Rome, if a stop is not put to this persecution." He gave two thousand pounds out of his own purse, and procured thirty-seven thousand pounds from the liberality of protestants in England, for the relief of the sufferers.

were signally subdued—abundant scope was afforded for the industrious and the virtuous—trade and commerce revived—in every county of England morality and religion flourished as they had never done before—the incorrigible alone resisted the amelioration—and Europe itself beheld with astonishment the marvellous change which one man's presence could effect over a whole nation. Although he used at times despotic power in the attainment of these ends, he was no despot at heart. There is abundant proof that it was his cherished purpose, by this very means, to usher in the era of a well-regulated freedom. Before his death, he had released the country from some of the strong measures, needful in a time of threatening anarchy. The power of the major-generals was gradually diminished as soon as the intended effect was produced, and was ultimately taken away altogether. Had he lived a few years longer, it appears in the highest degree probable that the blessings of domestic peace would have been secured to the nation, in the very manner indicated in so many of Cromwell's speeches to his successive parliaments; the problem of a constitutional government would have been solved; and that which is now only imperfectly realised, two hundred years after his decease, would have been instituted and enjoyed. But it was not the will of Providence that such fruit should be gathered in such a season. It was enough that the remarkable events of that age should teach one class of truths; the final lesson of permanent freedom was reserved for later times. Moreover, as David was not permitted to build God's house, because he was a man of war; so Oliver Cromwell was not destined to erect the structure of our national

liberties, because he had been to so great an extent employed in the awful work of subjugation and bloodshed.

It now remains to take a brief retrospect of the religious condition of England, during the period embraced by this chapter.

From what has already been advanced, it is evident what would have been the result if the Westminster Assembly and the Long Parliament had continued in power. Besides setting their heart on the establishment of the presbyterian system, many laws infringing upon liberty of conscience were enacted from time to time.* Dissenting and heterodox persons were subject to sharp persecution; and, had not a change been effected in the government, a presbyterian yoke, as galling as that of the hierarchy, would have been fastened upon the necks of the people.

After the nation had been declared a free Commonwealth, much of the oppression exercised by the presbyterians ceased. The known fact, that the Independents of the army wielded supreme power,

* In January, 1645, an ordinance was passed, abolishing the Book of Common Prayer, and substituting the Directory of the Westminster Assembly, which in the following September was rendered compulsory. In April, 1645, an ordinance was passed for silencing all such preachers as were not ordained or allowed by those appointed by parliament. In December, 1646, a more stringent ordinance was passed, prescribing punishment on those who spoke in "derogation of the church government" then established. Many baptists suffered under the operation of this ordinance; amongst the rest, Hanserd Knollys. Yet this year witnessed the publication of three remarkable treatises on liberty of conscience,—Mr. Dell's Sermon before Parliament, on "Right Reformation;" Richardson's "Necessity of Toleration;" and Jeremy Taylor's celebrated "Liberty of Prophesying."

prevented the subordinate agents of presbytery from acting as they had formerly done.* Still, the several ordinances of parliament relating to religion continued in force, and might be carried into execution whenever the time favored.

If the Commonwealth's men had discharged their duty in the season when most of power was in their hands, between 1649 and 1653; if they had repealed existing ordinances relating to religion, which, besides being unjust and partial, fomented divisions amongst the people; they would have done good service to their country, and have removed many of those grounds of necessity on which Cromwell felt himself called upon to terminate their supremacy. But they had neither the inclination nor the power to do what was so eminently needful at that crisis.

The gradual manner in which the Protectorate became consolidated, accounts in some measure for that order of things which sprang up under it in relation to religion. No doubt one of the primary objects of Cromwell was to secure for the people liberty of conscience. For this, he had originally engaged in the conflict when the persecution of the godly was the settled policy of the hierarchy. His most cherished purpose was to liberate the conscience of Christian England from the oppression to which Laud and his agents had subjected it. But, unfortunately, he contemplated the subject of religious liberty from one side only. He failed to apprehend the whole question. His feelings were stronger than

* "There doth not appear more love to God, to his people, and to this nation, than in the officers of the army. I pray you, give us leave to own and speak well of them." Richardson's Cause of the Poor Pleaded, p. 15.

his judgment. The persecution of truly religious men first awakened his sympathies and roused his indignation; and when he had succeeded in putting an end to that, he seemed to forget that others beside Christians had consciences, whose rights were as much to be respected by a statesman, as those of the godly. He overlooked the fact, that Laud had persecuted the puritan nonconformists, not so much on account of their piety as their opposition to that form of it which was prescribed by the hierarchy. He also failed to perceive, that if the ascendant rulers of the day are justified in assuming that their religious opinions are the only ones that should be established or tolerated; their successors of the morrow, though entertaining totally opposite sentiments, are justified in assuming the same ground in relation to theirs. This partial consideration of a very comprehensive question led to what may be termed the errors of his policy in relation to religion, in which it must be confessed he was countenanced, not merely by the theory and practice of his predecessors, but also by most of the religious parties of the age.

Although it is true that no uniform ecclesiastical system can be said to have been established under the Protectorate, yet a certain mode of propagating religion was favoured, patronized, and endowed, to the disparagement of all others. Compared with previous establishments, that of the Protectorate was abundantly liberal; but, compared with what ought to have been, and ultimately will be the relations between religion and the state, Cromwell's system was essentially unscriptural and unjust. When the church property was alienated from its ancient

hierarchical uses, it should have been appropriated, with suitable provisions and on just principles, to national purposes alone. Instead of this, Cromwell still devoted it for the most part to religious uses. The universities were regarded not merely as educational, but as religious institutions for the religious benefit of the country. Their endowments and resources were strictly appropriated to the ends of religion and learning; while the reformation effected in them was a mere change of hands and measures. Episcopalians and prelatists were turned out, that presbyterians and Independents might occupy their room. Although it is easily granted that the morality of the latter was palpably superior to that of the former,* the justice of the alienation is not established by the fact. The same observations apply to the various livings, tithes, bishops' lands, endowments, and all other species of property, formerly appropriated to the use of the church of England. All these should have been reserved for national objects. Instead of this, they were still devoted to religious uses. The rights of patrons were abridged, and a committee of triers had power to decide upon the fitness or unfitness of all candidates for vacant livings; † but the ministry occupying the various parishes of the land were a state-paid ministry as before. Many of the clergy of the abolished hierarchy were deprived, and their places were occupied by presbyterians or Independents, or

* For an account of Oxford under Owen, see Stoughton's Spiritual Heroes; and Orme's Life of Owen, Chapter vii.

† The Triers were undoubtedly the means of excluding many improper characters from the ministry; but the power with which they were invested was as much a civil and religious wrong as that which was formerly exercised by the Court of High Commission.

those who were willing to pass for such. It is true that much greater liberty was enjoyed under the new system than under the hierarchy. It is also true, that a much more serviceable and truly pious order of men were inducted into the livings of the establishment,—men whose labours were, on the whole, crowned with great success. * Such facts, however, do not affect the question of principle in relation to the changes thus brought about. It so happened, that Cromwell and the ascendant party of that day were earnest, evangelical Christians, who sought to establish a godly ministry all over the land. But what if their successors should happen to be another order of men? Were they to be bound by a system dictated by the consciences of their predecessors, any more than their predecessors by a system dictated by the consciences of theirs? The conclusion is evident, that no system involving the principle of a national establishment of religion can at the same time be permanent and just.

It is difficult to ascertain, with any thing like accuracy, the relative proportions of those who occupied the places of the parochial clergy during this period. The measures of Cromwell were as free as possible from sectarianism. Episcopalians, presbyterians, Independents, baptists, and latitudinarians, were alike admitted to the cure of souls, provided they could give proof of piety and talent. It seems probable that the great majority were either episcopalians or latitudinarians, if we may judge from the number of those who retained their livings after the Restoration.

The manner in which the Independents connected

* Baxter and others have given the highest testimony to this effect.

themselves with the state system was somewhat remarkable. Some have referred to it as an inconsistency on their part to associate themselves in any way with state patronage and pay. What we have already advanced, however, is sufficient to show that the Congregational Independents of that day not only saw no inconsistency in putting themselves under the surveillance of the state, but deemed it their duty to be subject to the magistrate for conscience' sake, in so far as the magistrate acted in accordance with what they conceived to be the directions of God's word. It was no uncommon thing for Independent ministers to occupy parish lectureships and livings, although, at the same time, pastors of churches organized and governed on Congregational principles. Owen at Coggeshall, Greenhill at Stepney, Bridge at Yarmouth, may be mentioned as specimens of a great number besides. We have already referred to the case of Owen at Coggeshall. It appears that he followed the same practice while he was Dean of Christchurch and Vice-Chancellor of Oxford. Cawdrey has affirmed that he endeavoured to form an Independent church in his own college.* It seems more probable that he joined that of which Dr. Goodwin, then president of Magdalen College, was pastor, and of which John Howe, and some other celebrated men of the day, were members. Greenhill was lecturer at St. Dunstan's, Stepney, at the time when he was pastor of the Independent Church afterwards assembling in Stepney Meeting. It seems probable also that Henry Burton was either a minister or a member of the same church, before he was ejected from Friday-street. Bridge and Tillinghurst of Yar-

* Cawdrey's Independency further proved to be a Schism, p. 30.

mouth were regarded as the "town ministers," and received pay both from the corporation and the state, while former was the pastor, and the latter the teacher, of the the Independent church in that town.* Facts like these are easily explained. The Congregational Independents of that period acted in accordance with their avowed principles. None of the parties whose names have been mentioned, and none of those who were associated with them, were advocates of universal and unlimited toleration, much less advocates of an entire separation between church and state. The opinions of modern Independents should not embarrass our views respecting a historical question. John Goodwin, Beverley of Rowel, John Simpson, and many others, baptist and pædo-baptist, who were thorough Independents, repudiated all connection with the state in religious matters; but the Congregational Independents, who constituted the majority, were not sufficiently enlightened to see any inconsistency in their receiving state patronage and emolument, as vicars, rectors, public preachers, and lecturers, so long as they could follow out the principles and discipline of the congregational polity in a private manner.†

* For an admirable and original account of the relations subsisting between the Independents and presbyterians, and between both and the state, during the Commonwealth and the Protectorate, see Stoughton's Spiritual Heroes, chap. VIII.

† Of course a church cannot be strictly independent while receiving support, directly or indirectly, from a foreign source. Milton lashed the Independents of his day on this score. Still—although the cases are widely different, so far as the state is concerned—the same principle holds good in respect to *all* churches not self-supported: village churches, for example, that derive support for their ministry from county associations, etc.

During the protectorate of Richard Cromwell, the Independents met in London, at the Savoy, for the purpose of giving expression to their opinions respecting these and other matters. They had obtained the permission of Oliver Cromwell to this effect, a few months before his death;* but did not meet till the 29th of the September following. About two hundred ministers and delegates, from above a hundred churches, assembled.† Owen, Goodwin, Nye, Bridge, Caryl, and Greenhill, prepared the "heads of agreement," and the whole was published afterwards as "A Declaration of the Faith and Order, owned and practised in the Congregational Churches in England; agreed upon and consented to by their Elders and Messengers, in their Meeting at the Savoy, October 12, 1658." This declaration agrees with the confession of the Westminster Assembly in doctrine; but expresses the peculiar views of the Congregationalists of that time respecting polity. Each church is regarded, in this document, as invested with all power essential to self-government. The office-bearers are declared to be "pastors, teachers, elders, and deacons." Ordination is considered important to order, but not indispensable to ministerial validity. Synodical authority is repudiated. The association of churches for union and mutual counsel is warmly recommended. But no where is there a

* Cromwell granted permission very reluctantly. Orme accounts for this, on the ground that his interest consisted in keeping parties in a divided state. Yet Baxter was violently opposed to the Savoy meeting, because he thought it would interfere with his scheme of union between Independents and presbyterians. The probability is that Cromwell feared a second Westminster Assembly.

† Many churches refused to send delegates; no doubt from a wise fear, at a time when so many Independents held church livings. No parallel can be drawn between that time and this.

distinct avowal of the entire separateness of religion from the supervision and control of the state. The preface, supposed to have been written by Owen, affirms that the Independents "had always maintained the great principle that, among all Christian states and churches, there ought to be vouchsafed a forbearance and mutual indulgence to saints of all persuasions, that keep to, and hold fast, the necessary foundations of faith and holiness; that all professing Christians, with their errors, that are purely spiritual, and intrench and overthrow not civil society, are to be borne with, and permitted to enjoy all ordinances and privileges, according to their light, as fully as any of their brethren who pretend to the greatest orthodoxy; and that if they had all the power, which any of their brethren of different opinions had desired to have over them or others, they would freely grant this liberty to them all." *

Such was the amount of liberty advocated by the Independents of that day—a liberty in which Christians alone were included, and which was not deemed incompatible with a national establishment of religion. When this declaration was presented to Richard Cromwell, in the name of the associated ministers, it was devolved upon him, as a duty, to take care of the religion of the people. Dr. Thomas Goodwin thus addressed his Highness on the occasion:

"And now we present to your Highness what we have done, and commit to your trust the common faith once delivered to the saints. The gospel, and the saving truths of it, being a national endowment bequeathed by Christ himself at his ascension, and committed to the trust of some in the nation's behalf;

* Orme's Life of Owen, pp. 176—180.

'committed to my trust,' saith Paul, 'in the name of the ministers;' and we look at the magistrates as *custos utriusque tabulæ*,* and so commit it to your trust, as our chief magistrate, to countenance and propagate.†"

Such expressions as these show clearly the opinions of the congregational Independents respecting the duty of the magistrate in relation to religion. The ministers and churches that dissented from these views, were regarded as holding extreme principles, peculiar to themselves, and disavowed by the great majority of the Congregationalists. The address of Goodwin is in accordance with the language already quoted from the writings of the party; with the article in the Declaration relating to civil magistracy; with the practice of the party during the recent Protectorate; and with the avowed aims of Oliver Cromwell himself. Besides holding the benefices and lectureships of the state, the Congregationalists had formed a prominent portion of the Committee of Triers. The names of Goodwin, Owen, Caryl, Nye, Carter, Simpson, Greenhill, Strong, Slater, Cradock, Peters, and Lockyer, all of them Inde-

* Keeper of both tables.

† Mr. Orme, in his comment on this address, says, "Part of this address I do not understand, and the rest of it I disapprove. What he means by the gospel being a national endowment, I know not; and as to the magistrate being the keeper of both tables of the law, I can only say, it must be understood in a very qualified sense, otherwise it would convey an idea, not only dangerous in itself, but in opposition to the avowed belief of the framers of the document presented." While agreeing with Mr. Orme in his opinion of the sentiments expressed, we can only state our surprise that he should have deemed them at all novel. They were common to the Congregationalists of that and preceding times.

pendents,* are contained in the ordinance of March 20th, 1654, by which the commission was constituted. The object of that committee was such as to prevent any person from being connected with it, who did not admit the right of the state to provide a religion for the people, and to exercise a discretionary power in the admission of ministers to the state livings.†

At a later period still, these were the opinions of the congregational Independents. After Richard's abdication, when all parties were in a state of confusion, the ministers and delegates of the congregational churches assembled in London, and passed the following resolutions:‡—

"*First.* We judge a Parliament to be the expedient for the peace of these nations; and withal we do desire that due care be taken that the Parliament be such as may preserve the interest of Christ and his people in these nations.

* John Tombes, Henry Jessey, and Daniel Dyke, all of them baptists, were also on this committee.

† John Goodwin very justly opposed this commission in his "Βασανισται, or The Triers, or Tormentors—Tried and Cast, by the Laws both of God and of Men, etc." We cannot understand the grounds on which Mr. Hanbury should write of the title of Goodwin's book, as "made up of assumptions;" and of the book itself as a "diatribe." Surely it is quite as well written as Marchamont Nedham's reply, and more free from personality and vituperation. Besides, Goodwin was in the right; and neither Baxter's testimony to the good effects of the system, nor any other, can justify what in itself was wrong. For the entire ordinance, see Hanbury, III. 422—424.

‡ We are not aware of any other account of this meeting, than that which is furnished by the Yarmouth church records. It appears, however, that Owen was the party who summoned Bridge to attend it.

"*Secondly.* As touching the magistrate's power in matters of faith and worship, we have declared our judgment in our late Confession; and though we greatly prize our Christian liberties, yet we profess our utter dislike and abhorrence of a universal toleration, as being contrary to the mind of God in his word.

"*Thirdly.* We judge that the taking away of tithes for the maintenance of ministers, until as full a maintenance be equally secured, and as legally settled, tend very much to the destruction of the ministry and the preaching of the gospel in these nations.

"*Fourthly.* It is our desire that countenance be not given, or trust reposed, in the hands of Quakers; they being persons of such principles as are destructive to the Gospel, and inconsistent with the peace of civil societies."*

Resolutions like these, are sufficiently indicative of the views of the congregational ministers and churches at this period. The first expresses and confirms the policy adopted by Oliver Cromwell—the preservation of "the interest of Christ and his people in these nations." The second discriminates between liberty of conscience for christians, and "universal toleration;" advocates the former, and avows "dislike and abhor-

* Mr. Bridge's "report of what was done by the messengers of the churches at London," presented at a meeting of the congregational church at Yarmouth, December 28th, 1659.—Stoughton's Spiritual Heroes, pp. 273—277. There is some room for the question whether these resolutions were those of the London Conference, or of the Yarmouth church. The former opinion seems much the more probable, on many accounts. The wording of the second resolution is almost sufficient to decide the question,—"we have declared *our* judgment in *our* late confession."

rence" of the latter. It refers also to the "late confession,"—that is, the Declaration of Faith and Order already adverted to,—as expressing the same judgment. The third advocates a "legal maintenance" for the ministry, and deprecates the abolition of tithes, until some adequate legal substitute is provided. The fourth objects to the Quakers, not merely on the ground of their irregular proceedings, but also on account of their peculiar religious "principles;" and expresses a desire that they might not be countenanced by the civil power in any manner, much less by being promoted to public offices in the state.*

All these resolutions are utterly inconsistent with the hypothesis, of which modern Independents are too apt to boast,—that the leading Congregationalists of the Commonwealth period were advocates of a perfect liberty. The last of them, in particular, attaches a stigma to their name, which nothing can remove. It is true, that the Quakers had acted in a reprehensible manner, on several occasions.† They had disturbed

* Mr. Stoughton's comment on these resolutions is much to the same effect as ours, only more apologetic. We cannot agree with Mr. S. in the opinion, that "the Yarmouth Independents only anticipated one of the greatest philosophers of the age." The difference between the opinions of Locke and those of the framers of the resolutions, is as great as that which exists between liberty and sectarianism.

† The character and history of the Quakers, notwithstanding their errors on some points, scarcely need to be vindicated in the present day. Their peculiar views respecting the "inward light," were, no doubt, the result of the puritan doctrine concerning the Spirit pushed to an extreme. They have ever been the "straightest sect" among christians. But how many of their peculiar principles have been gradually adopted by other sections of the christian church! George Fox, the father and founder of the sect, was born at Drayton, in Leicestershire, of poor parents, in 1624; was

some religious assemblies at the time of public worship, and some of their number had fallen into delusions of the most extravagant nature; but they had suffered for these things quite beyond their due, and by this time had betaken themselves to more moderate courses. Besides this, their principles, however erroneous or defective, were of an inoffensive kind. They were advocates of honesty and peace. They deprecated the use of the sword in any and every case. If they disturbed public worship, it was on the supposition that a higher authority than man's commanded them to bear testimony to the truth, and at a time when the parish church was considered the "public place." They never proceeded to acts of violence, like the Fifth-Monarchy men.* George Fox

brought up as a shepherd, with little or no education; commenced his public career in his twenty-third year; was imprisoned at Nottingham, Derby, and other places, for disturbing public worship with his doctrines; but during the protectorate, became more wise, and secured the "Bull and Mouth" for his followers. The presbyterians were very bitter against them, and some of the congregational Independents joined the presbyterians in persecuting them. Nailor, Whitehead, Parnel, and others, were tormented without mercy, and great numbers were imprisoned. The same treatment pursued them in New England, but not without remonstrance from Owen and many Independents in England. The Independents of the Savoy would not have them cruelly persecuted; but they would have the state refuse them "countenance and trust."—See Gough and Sewell's History of the Quakers; Fox's Journal; Bogue and Bennett's History of the Dissenters, I. 157—178; State Trials, vol. v; Mackintosh's History of England, vi. 219—222.

* This name was given to those who believed that "the saints" were to rule in the earth by the power of the sword. They were political millenarians; but many of them men of high religious principles. Canne and Harrison were their chief leaders,—the former as the interpreter of prophecy, and the latter as general.

had satisfied the Protector that the state had nothing to fear from them or their principles, and had secured his respect, at several audiences, by the evident honesty of his motives and benevolence of his aims. In addition to this, they claimed the utmost liberty of conscience, and conceded to others what they claimed for themselves. It would have been more becoming, therefore, if the Congregationalists had discriminated respecting their principles and proceedings, instead of seeking to deprive them of their civil rights.

After this review of the relative position of the Independents during the commonwealth and protectorate, it is not difficult to account for the reaction which impeded their progress in subsequent times. They accomplished much in the defence of evangelical truth, and in the various departments of scriptural theology. They vindicated, with great power, the claims of the congregational polity. They were a long way in advance of papists, episcopalians, and presbyterians. But they had not, as a body, arrived at the full measure of those principles which constitute a full-orbed and scriptural Independency. The thorough Independents became more and more a minority, in proportion as the sun of prosperity shone on the party. The majority, augmented by numbers who professed the name without understanding or holding the principles of Independency, became enamoured of state patronage, and retrograded rather than advanced in the maintenance of correct views. Their position became, at length, quite

They created considerable disturbance during the protectorate, and damaged the cause of the baptists, of whom they were chiefly composed, by their violence.—See Hanbury, vol. III., chapters lxxx, lxxxi.

anomalous. Claiming exemption for themselves, in many important respects, from the interference of the state, they nevertheless held a direct relationship to it, of such a kind as was most favourable to their own advancement. At a time when their unanimous advocacy of perfect liberty of conscience might have led Cromwell and parliament to a reconsideration of the whole question of establishments, and to a reconstruction of civil affairs after the manner of the American Republic, they stopped short. They yielded to their fears respecting the consequences of universal toleration, instead of confiding in justice and the God of truth. It is conceded that, within the sphere defined by their peculiar opinions, they were generous and tolerant; but the limitations of that sphere were such as to exclude from perfect liberty large classes of their fellow-citizens as much entitled to it as themselves. In some particulars, Oliver Cromwell was greatly in advance of them. He actually conceded a liberty to both papists and episcopalians, which his own party disavowed; and would have admitted the Jews to the privileges of citizenship, if he had not been thwarted by those who ought to have been foremost in hailing the concession with joy.

If the Independents of this period had been united, on a proper basis; if they had known and faithfully advocated the whole length of their own principles; if they had stood entirely aloof from all connection with the state in their religious capacity; if they had refused to receive any of the emoluments formerly appropriated by the anglican hierarchy; if they had thus done their best to instruct both rulers and ruled, by example as well as by precept, in the great principles of civil justice and religious freedom; the im-

partiality of their demeanour could not have failed to secure the admiration of their country and the advancement of their principles in succeeding years, even though it might not have averted the perils which afterwards overtook them, and in which, for a season, their own liberties, and those of the nation, were overwhelmed.*

Richard Cromwell succeeded to the protectorate in his thirty-third year. The mildness of his character, which would have suited the reign of legitimacy, unfitted him for a post of so much responsibility and danger. He was well received on his accession. Addresses, of a flattering character, were sent to him from all quarters; the army, the navy, and even the city, gave in their adhesion to his government; and for a few months his administration proceeded with tranquillity. Even the royalists regarded him with favour, and the presbyterians laid by much of the acerbity of temper which they had evinced towards the victorious Oliver. But this promising aspect of affairs was short-lived, and was succeeded by one of increasing alarm and peril.

* John Goodwin protested with his dying breath, as we have seen, against the doings of the congregational Independents. Milton also lifted up his trumpet voice to the last, in loud and warning notes. In 1659, he published his two famous treatises,--the one against *force*, and the other against *hire*, as employed by the state, in matters of religion. The first, addressed to Richard's parliament, is entitled, "A Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes;" the latter, addressed to the revived Long Parliament, after Richard's abdication, is entitled, "Considerations touching the likeliest Means to Remove Hirelings out of the Church, etc." Our limits alone prevent quotation from these masterly works. See an admirable, though brief account of both, in the Introductory Review to Milton's Prose Works, by Robert Fletcher.

Richard's first parliament met on the 27th January, 1659. The writs were directed after the ancient fashion. The disfranchised boroughs regained the privilege which, on account of their smallness, they had lost in the time of Oliver; while the large towns, such as Manchester, Leeds, and Halifax, were deprived of the franchise. The policy of Richard's government, in thus reverting to the old law of election, may be seen in the result. No doubt, the change which Cromwell had effected in the representative system had been fruitful of dispute; but the representatives thereby chosen were more likely to act for the welfare of the nation, than the nominees of small and corrupt boroughs. Many concealed royalists got into parliament, in consequence of this return to the old system, while the return itself was regarded as the first step in a counter-revolution; and before long, both parliament and army were divided into factions. The Independents now became suspicious of the proceedings of the presbyterians; perhaps not without good reason, remembering, as they did, that the chief cause of their enmity to Oliver, had been his determination to suppress their intolerant proceedings. They feared lest their influence in parliament and in the government should give them an undue ascendancy. A coalition was at length formed between the officers of the army and the republicans in the House of Commons, the object of which was the dissolution of parliament. Their designs were successful. Against his better judgment, but with a commendable anxiety to avoid bloodshed, Richard dissolved parliament, abdicated the throne, and retired to private life. The Long Parliament was now revived, and with it all the party feelings that had

threatened the nation at the time when Oliver Cromwell dismissed it in 1653. Endless confusion speedily arose, and the presbyterians joined the royalists in attempting to recall the Stuarts.

The army and the Independents were now split up into various sections, the chief of which, with Fleetwood at its head, met at Wallingford-House. Owen and Vane appear to have been associated with this party. In August, 1659, when the Long Parliament was in danger from the combination of royalists and presbyterians, the congregational churches in London offered to raise three regiments for its defence, and obtained permission to do so.* They had become alarmed, and not without reason, for their own liberty. They saw before them nothing less than ruin, should the enemies of the commonwealth succeed in their aims.

The chief instrument in promoting the designs of the royalists was General Monk. Like many others, he was nominally an Independent, but really a man of no character. During Cromwell's vigorous administration, he had discharged his duties efficiently, as the deputy of the protector in Scotland; but now that the condition of public affairs had changed, he looked round on the distraction of parties with a purely selfish regard to his own interests. Owen, and the Independents of London, were anxious to prevent the evil consequences apprehended from his mingling in the fray, and sent a deputation on the ground of the connection subsisting between him and the Independents, to remind him of his duties at that season, and to deprecate his proposed advance with the army of Scotland into England. Monk pro-

* Whitelocke's Memoirs, p. 683; Orme's Life of Owen, p. 217.

tested that his only desire was the settlement of the Commonwealth, with proper securities for liberty, civil and religious. By his dissimulation, he prevented the English army from effectually opposing his movements, and marched into London; to the great joy of the presbyterians and royalists, who looked upon him as an ally, or at least as an antagonistic power to the already divided army of the Independents.

After many hypocritical protestations that he was solely concerned for the consolidation of the commonwealth, Monk declared for a free parliament. Such a declaration, at such a time, was neither more nor less than a call for the restoration of monarchy. The Rump Parliament was again dissolved. The elections throughout the country were favourable to the royal family. The House of Lords, which revived in its ancient character, joined with the House of Commons in inviting the exiled heir of the House of Stuart home. All opposition was now in vain. Amidst great rejoicings, Charles the Second ascended the long vacant throne of his father.

CHAPTER III.

INDEPENDENCY AND THE RESTORATION; OR, DURING THE REIGNS OF CHARLES THE SECOND AND JAMES THE SECOND. 1660—1688.

THE old civil polity was now restored. It became what it had been when Charles the First fled from London, in 1642. To all appearance the intervening years had been spent in vain by a whole nation. The protracted struggle, in which so much blood had been shed, and so many heroic deeds had been performed in the name of liberty, seemed to be without issue. If any change was observable in the condition of the people generally, it was apparently for the worse. The very nation which had put itself into a posture of resolute antagonism to Charles the First, welcomed with open arms, and without any guarantee of liberty, his treacherous and dissolute son.

Great deeds, however, are not always to be judged of by their immediate results. The commonwealth period sowed the seeds which were to spring up in due season. The conflicts of that remarkable age were not absolutely fruitless. It might take more than one reign of effeminacy and of vice to commend to an entire people the noble principles and lofty aims, brought into public view, for the first time, in the days of Oliver Cromwell; but a Charles and a James the Second prepared for that revolution, under Wil-

liam the Third, from which the advancement of British liberties under a constitutional monarchy begins.

The change which passed over the nation at this period, completely reversed the position of the Independents. Together with the presbyterians, they had occupied the highest offices of the state. While catholics and episcopalians had been held in subordination, they were to be seen in the "high places of the earth." At Hampton Court, Windsor, Whitehall; in London, Edinburgh, and Dublin; in parliament, in the courts of law, in the public institutions throughout the kingdom; in the city, and all inferior corporations, and in cathedral and parish churches; presbyterians and Independents had held the first places and were the men of chief note. Now, all was changed. With Charles the Second's accession, parties resumed their old relative positions. The presbyterians, for a short time, fawned and tried to curry favour; but in vain. Charles's promises at Breda were a mere pretence, which he never thought of fulfilling so soon as his ends were gained. Some of the parties who had been the most zealous in seeking his restoration, were the first to experience his vindictiveness; and, together with the Independents, were doomed to pass through many years of privation and suffering.

The promise respecting liberty of conscience, contained in the declaration of Breda, was to the following effect: "And because the passion and uncharitableness of the times have produced several opinions in religion, by which men are engaged in parties and animosities against each other, which, when they shall hereafter unite in a freedom of conversation, will be composed or better understood, we do declare a liberty

to tender consciences; and that no man shall be disquieted, or called in question for differences of opinion in matters of religion, which do not disturb the peace of the kingdom; and that we shall be ready to consent to such an act of parliament, as, upon mature deliberation, shall be offered unto us, for the full granting that indulgence." At this very time, however, and from the commencement of his reign, a persecution was going on against both baptists and quakers. In August, 1660, the churches in North Wales, where Vavasor Powell had laboured with so much success, were ordered to be broken up. In September, the House of Lords gave instructions for the suppression of their meetings in Northamptonshire. The same conduct was pursued in Kent, more especially at Chatham, Dover, and Canterbury, where many were imprisoned. The Lincolnshire baptists petitioned his Majesty in July, to interfere on their behalf, and complained bitterly of the treatment they had received. "We have been much abused," they said, "as we pass in the streets, and as we sit in our houses; being threatened to be hanged, if but heard praying to the Lord in our families, and disturbed in our so waiting upon God, by uncivil beating at our doors, and sounding of horns; yea, we have been stoned when going to our meetings, the windows of the place where we have been met, struck down with stones; yea, taken as evildoers, and imprisoned, when peaceably met together to worship the Most High."*

Such was the condition of affairs, before the ecclesiastical position of the country was publicly settled; and although in October, the king put forth a further declaration, promising relief to tender consciences, and

* Crosby, II. 19—32.; Tracts on Liberty of Conscience, p. 292.

a cessation of persecution, the baptists and others still suffered. In the following November, the famous John Bunyan was apprehended while preaching, and imprisoned in Bedford jail, where he found two other ministers, and more than sixty dissenting brethren. It was during this period of illegal persecution, that the baptists published several of their pleas in behalf of toleration.*

Charles had also promised in The Declaration of Breda, "a free and general pardon to all our subjects, of what degree or quality soever, who, within forty days after the publishing hereof, shall lay hold upon this our grace and favour;" and that "no crime whatsoever committed against us, or our royal family, before the publication of this, shall ever rise in judgment, or be brought in question, against any of them." On the strength of this promise, the parliament and people of England welcomed a tyrant to the British throne. He soon found means to break his word. The declaration had a clause which "excepted" such persons as should be determined upon by parliament; and such was the delirium of both Lords and Commons, that when Charles was actually restored, they hastened to please him by shedding innocent blood. Twenty-nine persons were tried for having been implicated in the late king's death, ten of whom suffered the extremest penalty. These were Harrison, Carew, Scroope, Jones, Clement, Scot, Hugh Peters, Cooke, Axtel, and Hacker. This cold-blooded and wholesale murder, for which there was no justifying plea whatever, was attended by the most shocking

* An humble Petition and Representation, by the Anabaptists. 1660. A Plea for Toleration, 1661. Sion's Groans for her Distressed; or sober Endeavours to prevent innocent Blood, &c. 1661.

barbarity; thus affording an early proof of the real character of that change through which the treachery of Monk had conducted the nation.*

* An interesting account of the execution of Harrison, Carew, &c., is furnished in an original letter, found amongst the papers of Mr. James, of Bristol, and deposited in the library of the Baptist Academy in that city.

"London, that dismal, bloody, and never-to-be-forgotten 13th of the 8th month, 1660.

"This sad day have the enemy prevailed to shed the blood of the innocent, according to the cursed sentence of this cursed generation; for dear Harrison was, about eight this morning, brought out of Newgate, drawn on a sledge to Charing Cross, where, by ten, they had hanged and quartered him.

"He went with as cheerful a countenance as ever I saw him, and held out so to the end. His speech was very short, but very heavenly; encouraging still to own the cause of Christ, which he would revive. Said they did not know what they did; that he was fully assured of the love of the Lord; that the Lord would in due time own and justify him, in that for which he was condemned.

"Carew is very cheerful, not daunted nor terrified with his enemies. This day five are condemned."

Pepys, in his diary of October 13, 1660, records Harrison's execution. "I went out," he writes, "to Charing Cross, to see Major General Harrison hanged, drawn, and quartered; which was done there, he looking as cheerful as any man could do in that condition."

Chief Baron Bridgeman pronounced the sentence of the court, the terms of which were, "that his entrails should be taken out of his body while living, and burnt before his eyes."

Mr. Justice Cooke wrote in a manful strain from the Tower, vindicating the parliament and the army, "that they sought the public good, and would have enfranchised the people, if the nation had not more delighted in servitude than freedom."

Drs. Barwick and Dolben were appointed to visit these condemned regicides, for the purpose of bringing them to "repentance before God, of that horrid crime." A particular account is given, in the life of Barwick, by his brother, of the success of these royal and episcopal messengers of mercy. It is worthy of note, that

During the parliamentary recess in 1661, Charles proceeded to disband the army. This act was deemed expedient on several accounts; and that famous body of troops, which had won so many battles and decided so many changes in the past history of the nation, was now entirely passive, and immediately obeyed the voice of authority. Fifty thousand men gave up their arms and quitted the military service for ever. Past experience had taught them that the sword could not effect a settlement of the nation. But their resolution to disband,—an act which, in any other case, would have been attended by the most pernicious moral results,—was accompanied by another, to which they adhered as zealously as to any of their former resolves in the time of Oliver Cromwell. They had never been mercenaries; and they now devoted their energies in the several departments of honest and peaceful industry. The consequence was, that these old soldiers of the Commonwealth,

* John Cooke is stated in this testimony to have vindicated Hugh Peters with his dying breath, as "the brightest example of true holiness; by whom more souls had been converted to Christ, than by any other person in this age." For an account of the behaviour of Cooke and Peters, see Hanbury, chapters lxxxiii and lxxxv.

It may here be mentioned that the bones of Oliver Cromwell, Bradshaw, who had presided at Charles the First's trial, Ireton, Pride, and some others, were dug up out of their graves by authority, and hung up at Tyburn. Milton also suffered imprisonment for a short time, but escaped the fate of some who were no more implicated than himself in Charles's death. His Defence of the people of England, however, was publicly burnt by command of parliament. In 1662, Vane and Lambert, who had been state prisoners since the Restoration, were tried for their part in the death of Charles. Lambert was banished for life to Guernsey; Vane was beheaded, on the 14th of June, on Tower Hill.

scattered amongst the people, were known from all the rest by their singular temperance, diligence, and perseverance. So marked was their behaviour, that it became a common proverb, if any man was more provident or industrious than his neighbours, "that man is one of Noll Cromwell's soldiers."

As soon as the royalists had obtained indemnity for their past sufferings by the distribution amongst themselves of the favours of the crown, they went yet further, and became clamorous for the proscription of their enemies. They were determined if possible to wreak their vengeance upon those who had presumed so recently to vanquish them. They accomplished their object by the revival of the old ecclesiastical laws; presbyterianism gave way before the ancient hierarchism; and in a short time episcopacy was restored in all its former virulence.

An attempt was made in an early part of Charles's reign, and apparently with the consent of the monarch, to bring about an accommodation between the moderate episcopalians and presbyterians. Baxter was very earnest in his attempt to realise this object.* The episcopalians of Usher's school admitted that a bishop might have the services and assistance of a council of presbyters; and the presbyterians of Baxter's school admitted that each council of presbyters, or provincial assembly, might have an episcopal president. And since the two theories overlapped each other, it was deemed practicable to amalgamate

* Baxter's bigotry did much to frustrate his object. He expressly declared himself, in the conference at the Savoy, against a system by which socinians and papists might be tolerated. See Sylvester's Life of Baxter; Orme's Life and Times of Baxter; Mackintosh's History of England, VI. 339, VII. 3.

both interests in one system, with a revised liturgy and ritual. But theory and practice are two different things. The more secure the condition of the royalists, the more were they bent on the exclusive enjoyment of all their former privileges. Now that the army was disbanded, they had nothing to fear from puritan ascendancy. They were determined, therefore, to give loose rein to all the vindictive and licentious passions of their nature. The difference between them and the presbyterians was not speculative merely; it affected the entire character. They hated the very name of puritan. They suffered under the very thought of the austerity and sobriety of the precisians both of the presbyterian and Independent school. They wanted to restore a former sensuousness to literature and the fine arts; to open the theatres and places of public revelry; and to give scope for all the pent-up passions of the multitude. In these objects, the puritans stood in their way. They had always resisted such measures as encouraged immorality of all kinds and degrees. They had done so when in power, and they were prepared to do so now, so far as their influence and example might extend. On this account, they were hated by the cavaliers, the episcopalians, and the debased of all classes. Charles was precisely the man to yield to the wishes of the party, the extreme vices of which were represented in his own person. The convocation, instead of altering the Prayer-book to suit the tastes of the presbyterians, retained all its objectionable parts; and purposely added the edifying story of Bel and the Dragon to the apocryphal portions of the liturgy. It was the object of the bishops, with few

exceptions,* to make the presbyterians feel themselves in their power, and to make the terms of conformity as difficult as possible. "I am afraid the presbyterians will not conform," said the Earl of Manchester to the king. "I am afraid they will," said Sheldon, Bishop of London, "but now we know their minds, we will make them all knaves if they do." The conduct of the bishops and of the episcopalian clergy in general, originated, partly in vindictive, and partly in selfish motives. While they desired to punish those who had been the cause of their deprivation during so many years, they were anxious to devise some method of turning them out of those rich livings which they wanted for their own party.

Parliament was quite prepared to do all that the episcopalians desired, and even more. The general election of 1661 brought together a House of Commons more zealous for royalty than the king, and more zealous for episcopacy than the bishops.† The Restoration had opened the floodgates of immorality and sycophancy. The virtuous were drifted along the tide. Charles and his ministers could scarcely prevent parliament from retaliating on presbyterians and Independents more than all the measures which had been formerly directed against the royalists. The resolutions and acts of the House of Commons were such as had never characterised the proceedings of any previous parliament; were such as it would have been glad enough to rescind, a few years later. Every

* Reynolds, for example, who had been a presbyterian, and who accepted an offer of a bishopric, at the time when Baxter refused one.

† Macaulay's History of England, vol. I. p. 175.

member was compelled to take the sacrament. The Covenant was publicly burnt in Palace Yard. The Houses pledged themselves in no extremity to resist the will of the king by force. Every officer of a corporation was required to swear that resistance to the king's authority was in all cases unlawful. Some went so far as to attempt the re-institution of the Star Chamber and High Commission. The bishops were restored to their place in the upper house. The hierarchy was established as before; and episcopal ordination was now, for the first time, made indispensable to church preferment.

In 1662, the well known Act of Uniformity was passed, which required all ministers to swear their unfeigned assent and consent to everything in the Book of Common Prayer; and on St. Bartholomew's day, August 24th, about two thousand ministers were compelled to resign their livings and benefices, the great majority of whom were presbyterians, but many of whom were Independents and baptists. A similar deprivation had been enforced on the episcopalians by the Long Parliament; but not exactly on the same principle, nor from the same motives.* By those who hold that the state has no right to interfere with religion, both of these instances of deprivation are condemned. But no impartial person can hesitate to admit that, the principle of a state establishment of religion being granted, an act of great injustice and cruelty was practised on the last occasion. The most religious and worthy ministers of the day were turned out of the establishment, to make way for such as were most ignorant and corrupt.

* It is lamentable to find Bishop Heber, in his Life of Jeremy Taylor, defending the Act of Uniformity.

Amongst those who were ejected were Manton, Baxter, Bates, Owen, Bridge, Howe, Henry, Clarkson, Calamy, and men of like stamp. They were known from this time as non-conformists—a name which had been employed as early as in the reign of Elizabeth, but which became better known from this period.*

The Independents were now compelled to hold their meetings secretly, and for the most part in private houses. A few were re-ordained, in order to hold their livings, but renounced the authority to which they had submitted afterwards.† Some of their principal ministers were silenced, not having any public place of worship where they could preach the gospel;‡ while others gathered around them small societies of "faithful men," who adhered to their principles through all the troubles and persecutions of this period. The practice adopted during the time of the Protectorate, according to which the "church" was distinguished from the congregation or parish, was admirably suited to further the interests of truth and

* It has frequently been affirmed of late that the title of "nonconformist" belongs to this period exclusively, and that of "puritan" to an earlier period. This is not the case. From the days of Elizabeth downwards both titles were in use. The Apologetical Narration (1643) speaks of the puritans of Elizabeth's day as "the good old nonconformists." So also Forbes's Anatomy of Independency (1644), and Canne's Time of Finding (1658). "Inconformitan," and "unconformist," were also used in the earliest period.

† John Humphrey, for example. He was the first minister of the Independent church at Frome. He proved, however, the sincerity of his renunciation, and was imprisoned a few years later for publishing his reasons against the Sacramental Test Act. Congregational Magazine for 1830, p. 394.

‡ The celebrated David Clarkson was one of this class.

liberty at this season. Although ejected from the parish church or public lectureship, the Independent minister did not consider himself less the pastor than before of the society which had been formed on Congregational principles. When Bridge, for example, ceased to be "town minister" at Yarmouth, he did not cease to be pastor of the Independent church in Yarmouth. When Caryl was excluded from St. Magnus, London-bridge, he still presided over the members of that church which had been gathered during the time of his more public ministry. In all the cities and towns of England the same course was followed;* and hence the number of flourishing societies of a later period, that were prepared to act openly in seasons of indulgence and toleration, as they had previously assembled in secret when persecuting enactments drove them from public view. It should not be overlooked, however, that at this time many were imprisoned, and greater numbers heavily fined, for their refusal to attend the parish churches, or for having been discovered in attendance upon an unauthorized worship.

In the course of time the Act of Uniformity was followed by other measures adapted to make it more perfect as an instrument of persecution. The conduct of Charles, whether designedly or not it is difficult to say, led to these additional infringements on the liberty of the subject. On the 26th of December,

* In the church-book of the Independent church at Altham, Lancashire, we find a resolution to this effect: "1662. Upon the last Sabbath in the public place of worship, all were satisfied that neither Censures in the Bishops' Court nor Acts of Parliament could discharge the Pastor from his office, or from any duty connected with his office. *It was resolved unanimously to continue their connexion.*"

1662, he published a Declaration granting Indulgence to papists and nonconformists.* He had not at this time avowed himself a Roman catholic; neither was it generally known that he favoured the religion of Rome. A few months after, he assured the Commons that in Protestant zeal he did not yield even to the bishops, but that he was "by nature an enemy to all severity for religion and conscience, how mistaken soever."† If the presbyterians and Independents had been united in favour of an impartial toleration, it is possible that Charles might have secured the consent of parliament to his scheme. But they were not. The presbyterians to a man were averse to a toleration of papists, and the Independents were divided. Nye appears to have been thankful for the Declaration, and anxious that Baxter and the presbyterian party should join the Independents in endeavouring to procure a parliamentary confirmation of the measure. But Baxter held off, as he had previously done, when the king proposed a similar course shortly after the Restoration. Such was his fear, or his bigotry, that he was willing rather to suffer under intolerant acts than to enjoy liberty in common with papists and socinians. Some Independents sympathised with Baxter, while others "saw no reason why the papists should not have liberty of worship as well as others." ‡ In consequence of this division

* The indulgence to papists was very guarded. They were "not to presume so much upon his goodness as to look for toleration, or to scandalize protestants by the *open* practice of their worship."

† Parliamentary Hist., IV. 260.

‡ Orme's Life of Baxter, I. 299; Baxter's Life, II. 429, 430. The Independents were still two parties, congregational and thorough. Even Howe would not have objected to the Act of

amongst the parties most interested in the Indulgence, the king yielded to the House of Commons, now completely under the influence of the church of England, and consented to measures yet severer than any before enacted.

In 1664 the Conventicle Act was passed. This act made it a crime to attend a dissenting place of worship, and gave power to a single justice of the peace to convict, on the oath of an informer, any person above the age of sixteen who might have been present at any meeting for worship where five persons more than the household were assembled. The penalty for the first offence was three months' imprisonment, or the payment of five pounds; for the second, six months' imprisonment, or the payment of ten pounds; for the third, transportation beyond sea, or the payment of a hundred pounds. If a convicted party returned to his own country without permission, or before the expiration of his term of banishment, he was to suffer death.

The Conventicle Act was followed in 1665 by the Five Mile Act, the object of which was to drive away nonconformist ministers from those towns where they had become known by their labours, and where they were likely to enlist the sympathies of the people on their behalf. It prescribed a test for all who had been deprived of their benefices for nonconformity, of such a character that no man, much less a nonconformist, could conscientiously take it.* All who refused to

Uniformity, if it had comprehended the Independents and the orthodox nonconformists.

* The oath imposed by this act was as follows: "I, A.B., do swear that it is not lawful, upon any pretence whatsoever, to take arms against the king; and that I will not, at any time, endeavour any alteration of the government, either in church or state." Seth

take it were prohibited from coming within five miles of any corporate or borough town, or of any other town where they had resided as ministers. Many were thus driven from their homes as well as from their people, and compelled to undergo unspeakable hardships. The account which Oliver Heywood has given of his own sufferings, under the operation of this act, is only one out of the many which might be adduced.*

The magistrates who enforced these statutes were not merely inflamed by party spirit and the remembrance of past wrongs, but were generally men of the lowest character. The profligacy of the age was represented in their persons, and stimulated by their example. They received their appointment to office on account of their sycophant loyalty—not to the king, but to the clergy,—their unbounded joviality, and their hatred to dissenters. The parish constables were, with few exceptions, appointed to their inferior office on the same grounds; while the informers, who received a reward for every conviction, and who became a numerous class, were perhaps about the basest portion of the community. It is impossible to form a correct estimate either of the number of those who suffered, or of the amount of fines extorted, under the operation of these laws. It was calculated at a later period, that fifteen thousand families had been ruined, and that more than five thousand persons had died in prison, between the Restoration and the reign of James the Second, while millions of

Ward, bishop of Salisbury, and Clarendon, were the chief promoters of this Bill; Southampton, lord treasurer, its chief opponent. Southampton declared he would not take it himself.

* See Life of Oliver Heywood, Works, vol. I.

money were extracted in the shape of fines and confiscations from the unhappy victims of intolerance.*

In such a season as this, both presbyterians and Independents were in a condition of great depression. Besides the obloquy attaching to their nonconformity, and the difficulty they experienced in making their views known on account of the rigorous measures enacted against them, they had to resist the general torrent of infidelity and corruption. Moreover, the insurrection of Venner and the fifth-monarchy men, in 1661, had brought upon them much unmerited reproach. Baptists and quakers had long been forbidden to assemble in public, on account of their supposed sympathy with Venner's proceedings; and although the Independents were not named, they were involved in the same condemnation.†

Little effect was produced at such a period by either remonstrances or reasonings. While the passion of persecution moved the House of Commons, the bishops of the church rejoiced in the exercise of their powers, and mingling with the profligate courtiers of the day, cared for little but their own ease and the advance-

* William Penn's "Good Advice," in Mackintosh's Hist. of England, VIII. 79.

† Thomas Venner, and about fifty more had sallied forth from Swan Alley Meeting House, on January 6th, 1661, in the name of "King Jesus," and in hope of subverting the restored dynasty. On the 9th, the leaders were captured; on the 12th, Venner and another were hung. But a pretext was afforded by this foolish act for the proclamation which issued on the 10th, forbidding all meetings for public worship other than in parochial churches. The congregationalists published a declaration "against the late insurrection and rebellion." The names of Caryl, Nye, Goodwin, Greenhill, and others are affixed to this document. Hanbury, III. 595—599.

ment of their prerogative. The clergy from their pulpits vied with actors on the stage in holding up to ridicule the character and manners of the puritans; while poetry, philosophy, and literature, descended from their proper spheres either to vindicate the oppressions of rulers, or to inflict additional wounds upon the suffering nonconformists. Libertinism reigned everywhere. Vice was not only tolerated, but sanctioned and patronised. While such men as Baxter, Owen, and Bunyan, were suffering in jaol; Charles, surrounded by his mistresses, was sustained in his pride of power by an all but unanimous parliament, and flattered by the dignitaries of the established church as its sovereign and supreme head.

While the sufferings of the nonconformists were becoming more and more aggravated, the plague broke out in London. This visitation, surpassing in its results any that had visited the island for three centuries, swept away in six months more than a hundred thousand human beings.* During its progress, the course of immorality and vice was in some measure checked. While many hardened wretches became more desperate, there were not a few who were prepared, under the influence of alarm, to listen to the preaching of the gospel. If the clergy of the Church of England had been faithful to their duty, multitudes might have been awakened and convinced, and the pestilential visitation might have accomplished the beneficent purposes of a moral purification. But, with a few exceptions, the clergy fled their posts. While parliament prescribed its test, to deprive the

* The Five Mile Act was passed at Oxford during the plague; hence it is known as the Oxford Act.

godly ministers of the day from their useful spheres of labour; God in his providence prescribed another, which proved yet more efficacious, so far as the city clergy were concerned. The deserted pulpits were occupied by the nonconformists, who gathered around them large multitudes, and were the means of preparing many for a dying hour.

Scarcely had the pestilence begun to subside, when a fire, such as had never been known in Europe for centuries, laid the greater part of the city and most of the churches in ruins.* These successive visitations had some effect in mitigating for a season the persecution of the dissenters. In the city, temporary places of worship called Tabernacles were erected, in which the nonconformists preached to attentive audiences. Nye, Goodwin, Owen, Griffiths, Brookes, Caryl, Barker, and other Independents fitted up rooms for public service, and gathered around them large congregations.† Many were won over to the truth, and the hold which nonconformity gradually acquired over the people was confirmed by the noble position occupied by its advocates at this period.

Advantage was also taken of this period in diffus-

* The Fire of London commenced on the 2nd September, 1666, after midnight. Besides other losses, that of books was very considerable. The booksellers in St. Paul's Church-yard placed their stocks in the vaults under St. Paul's for security, where they were consumed with the cathedral. Sion College library, and many private ones, were entirely destroyed. See Baxter's Life, part I. pp. 98—100. Vaughan's History of England, pp. 631—635.

† Baxter has given a very impartial account of the labours of all parties in this season of calamity. Dr. Manton, Thomas Vincent, Thomas Doolittle, Dr. Annesly, Dr. Jacomb, Janeway, and others, were the principal presbyterians; and Dr. Stillingfleet, Dr. Tillotson, Dr. Patrick, Dr. Whitchcot, and Dr. Horton, were the principal conformists who preached in London during this time. Life, part III. 17—19.

ing sound views amongst all ranks respecting the principles and aims of the protestant dissenters. While Baxter sought to justify his own nonconformity, Owen and Howe, with more fixed principles, endeavoured to accomplish the same object for themselves. The two parties, presbyterian and Independent, were brought much nearer together than at any previous period, and some serious attempts were made by Baxter to unite them under one comprehensive system. Indeed Baxter's aim was to unite in one body episcopalians, presbyterians and Independents — a union which could be effected only by holding in abeyance all that was essential to the peculiar polity of each denomination. There are in fact only three normal kinds of church organization, Independency, or self-government; presbyterianism, or government by classes, with an oligarchical executive; and episcopalianism, or government by diocesan chiefs. To amalgamate these three distinct forms of polity must ever remain an impossibility. All that can be effected is what was accomplished afterwards in 1696, when the presbyterian and Independent churches in London united on a basis of friendly co-operation.

In the course of time, and in consequence of the impolitic and rash measures of Charles' government, a considerable reaction took place in the public mind. Clarendon, whose hatred of the puritans had inflamed the zeal of the House of Commons against them, fell from that place of power to which the Restoration had floated him; and a cabinet, known by the name of the *Cabal*, was formed by the monarch, with the special view of carrying out his own secret purposes. What those purposes were, it is not difficult at this time to ascertain.

It has been affirmed, that it was the purpose of the Stuart family,—a purpose amounting to a vow and an oath,—to inflict as much injury as possible on the English nation, and to reduce it to a state of utter weakness and disgrace, by way of revenge for the execution of Charles the First; and that in order to accomplish this, it was concerted between Charles and James the Second to bring the nation under a popish and French ascendancy. It is difficult to say whether there is any truth in the former part of this statement. There is no longer any question respecting the latter. The real object of Charles in all his public and domestic measures was to make Great Britain and Ireland a catholic state. This however was not easily to be effected. He could not suddenly accomplish so great a change. The great majority of his own adherents, notwithstanding their protestations of an unresisting loyalty, would have been opposed to him. He endeavoured, therefore, to approach his object by a series of gradual measures. Ten years after the day on which he had landed at Dover amidst the acclamations of the people, or in May, 1670, Charles signed a treaty with Louis the Fourteenth of France, in which he bound himself to make public profession of the Roman catholic religion, and to join his arms to those of Louis against the United Provinces and Spain. Louis, by the same treaty, bound himself to pay a large sum of money, and to assist Charles in suppressing any insurrection in England that might arise out of the attempt to accomplish these ends. In consequence of this engagement, England became for some time a subordinate nation, in the pay of France.

In 1673, after a recess of two years, the Houses of

Parliament re-assembled. Before this Charles's ministers had made both themselves and their master odious, by their foreign and domestic policy. The previous parliament had been prorogued in order to prevent the political storm that was evidently threatening them. The interval between the prorogation and the re-assembling of parliament had been occupied in promoting a series of measures which exasperated the nation. Proclamations rapidly succeeded one another, dispensing with acts of parliament and suspending the laws of the country. The most important of these was the "Declaration of Indulgence," in 1673. The professed object of this declaration, as in the former case, was to secure liberty of conscience and worship to Roman catholics and protestant nonconformists; but the real object was to prepare the way for a catholic ascendancy. The conduct of the Independents at this time demands special notice.

If they had been actuated by selfish motives they would have hailed, not only with joy, but without any question respecting the quarter from which it emanated, the instrument of their liberty. Their sufferings had been intense. They had been driven, not merely from the churches of the establishment, but from their flocks and from their homes. While great numbers were at this time in prison, some of their most eminent ministers were wandering as outcasts and exiles on the continent. If therefore they had fallen in with the measures of the Court, it would not have been a matter of grave surprise. But they were patriots, and regarded the permanent welfare of the country with more concern than their own personal ease. A few unsuspecting individuals, who were ignorant of the policy of Charles, availed them-

selves with seeming gratitude of his indulgence; but the great majority of the Independents and nonconformists mistrusted the motives of the monarch; and, so far as their conduct could declare their sentiments, united with the people in the condemnation of his despotic acts. They claimed as a right, liberty of conscience and worship; but they refused to receive it through the dispensing power of the monarch.

The country party now began to attack the policy of the cabal by a series of slow and scientific approaches. The Commons, at first, held out hopes that they would give support to the king's foreign policy; but insisted that he should abandon his system of domestic policy. Their first object was to obtain the revocation of the Declaration of Indulgence. Of all the unpopular steps taken by the government, this was the most unpopular. The enemies and the friends of religious freedom found themselves on the same side. The bigoted churchman exclaimed against the favour shown to the papist and nonconformist; and the nonconformist feared to accept a toleration which might pave the way for a catholic ascendancy, and which could not be permanent unless it were conceded in a constitutional manner.

At first, Charles thought of hazarding everything in the pursuit of his aims; but being better advised, he afterwards yielded. His ministers also became divided. Shaftesbury, perceiving the turn of affairs, admitted in the House of Lords that the declaration was illegal. Deserted by his chancellor, Charles withdrew the declaration, and promised that it should never be repeated. The nonconformists were thus once more reduced to their former condition.

Stimulated by victory, parliament determined to make good its success; and in the same year extorted an unwilling consent from the king to an act known as the Test Act, the professed object of which was to exclude the papists from power, but the operation of which told as prejudicially against the advancement of the nonconformists. This act provided, that all persons holding any office, civil or military, should take the oath of supremacy, subscribe a declaration against transubstantiation, and receive the sacrament in public according to the rites of the church of England.

The Nonconformists were now in a worse position than before,—excluded from every public office, and degraded to the utmost limit of the law. They could not but feel indignant at such treatment. If a test was needed for papists only, it would have been an easy matter to have made an exception in their favour; the more especially as their conduct had been so disinterested in respect to the Declaration of Indulgence. It was not, however, in accordance with the temper of parliament,* any more than of Charles, to show them special favour. The fact that they had been so quiet during the recent agitation, and that with little or no remonstrance, they had fallen in with the measures of parliament, was a sufficient reason in the minds of many for putting upon them this additional indignity.

The general course of public affairs, during the remainder of Charles the Second's reign, may be briefly told. The intrigues with France were at present unsuccessful. The people became gradually alarmed

* Some of the peers acting with the Duke of Buckingham, were noble exceptions; and attempts were made at different times to procure relief for the dissenters.

at the evident designs of the king. They feared a revival of popish influence and power in the state, and, associating the movements of the day in this direction with the personal aims of the monarch, came to hate him and his successive cabinets as heartily as they had once rejoiced at his restoration; while Louis the Fourteenth, by means of the influence which his money secured, did all in his power to keep the nation in a state of domestic division. They now began to feel that England had lost its former place amongst the European powers; and frequently enough the Independents had their bloodless revenge, in being able to point out to their persecutors the marked contrast between the position of England at that time, and what it was in the days of Oliver Cromwell.

Amongst those things which indicated the alarmed state of the public mind, was the detection of a supposed popish plot by Titus Oates, in 1678. The publication of his discoveries, and the coincidence of the actual murder of Godfrey, an eminent magistrate, which, at the time, was attributed to papists, excited the Londoners, and the nation generally, to an absurd degree of vindictiveness and fear. The metropolis was a scene of constant agitation. The train bands were called out; patrols marched the streets by day and night; cannon were planted round Whitehall; the vaults under both Houses were occupied by a guard, to prevent, it was said, the recurrence of a second gunpowder plot; the Roman catholic members were driven from their seats; and James, then Duke of York, was excluded from the Privy Council. Meanwhile, the jails were filled with papists, and justices of the peace were busy everywhere in searching after proofs of the supposed conspiracy. Much innocent

blood was shed during this season of panic fear. Danby, Charles's prime minister, was impeached; and an attempt was made by an Exclusion Bill to prevent the Duke of York, who had avowed himself a Roman catholic, from succeeding to the British throne.

Seasons of violence cannot last long, and are generally accompanied by a reaction. With a change of ministry and measures, the agitation gradually subsided; and with the rise of Halifax to power, the course of affairs tended in a new direction. Although, in the House of Commons, the Exclusion Bill went through all its stages with overwhelming majorities, the House of Lords, supported by the Bishops, rejected it. A strong reaction set in from this period, against the Whigs, and in favour of the Tories. The detection of the Rye House plot, which had for its object the assassination of the king and of the heir presumptive, led to general indignation against the whole Whig body. The king, released from the restraint of former years, revenged himself on the causes of his humiliation. Russell and Sydney suffered the death of political martyrs. The city of London, and other corporations which were in the habit of sending Whig members to parliament, were compelled to surrender their privileges; and Toryism had the ascendancy everywhere.

While these things were going on in England, James, at the head of the administration in Scotland, had been preparing himself by cruel practices for the part which he was afterwards to play on a larger scale. By the Test Act he was excluded from all public office in England; but he nevertheless returned, in 1684, took his seat in the council, and presided over the naval administration.

In the midst of this altered and singular posture of

affairs, Charles the Second died, on the sixth of February, 1685. His decease was sudden and unexpected. On the previous Sunday, he rose in good health, and spent the day as usual in gaiety and pleasure, attended by his mistresses, and surrounded by favourites, revellers, and gamblers. In the evening he complained that he did not feel quite well, and passed a restless night. The next morning, soon after he had risen, he was seized by a fit, and fell into the arms of one of his attendants. The hand of death was upon him. Remedial measures were adopted, and on Thursday morning, the London Gazette announced that his Majesty was going on well; but a relapse took place in the evening, and the following day, at noon, he expired. He died a Roman catholic. Sancroft, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Ken, bishop of Bath and Wells, attended upon him during his illness, and were permitted to pronounce over him the absolution service of the church of England; but he refused to declare that he died in the communion of that church of which he was the visible head. He confessed himself to John Huddlestone, the Benedictine monk who had saved his life after the battle of Worcester; and received absolution and extreme unction from his hands.*

Thus terminated the career of this abandoned monarch, the greater part of whose life was one continuous scene of hypocrisy, coarse sensuality, and meanness, and whose reign left too much of the impress of his own vices on a large portion of the people of England. One of the best symptoms of the revived morality of the present age is the circum-

* For a graphic account of the circumstances attending Charles's death, see Macaulay's Hist. of England, vol. I., pp. 428—439; Mackintosh's Hist. of England, vol. VII., pp. 375—383.

stance that the character of the royal profligate, which for so long a period after his death it was the fashion to extol, is now held up to pity and scorn, while that of the Protector of the Commonwealth is rising more and more in public esteem.

James the Second now succeeded, without opposition, to the British throne. But before we proceed with our general narrative, we propose to look back upon the five and twenty years through which our history has brought us, for the purpose of noticing some of those particulars which illustrate the position and conduct of the Independents.

The period thus adverted to was, on the whole, the most important period in the literary history both of the Independents and nonconformists. Various circumstances contributed to this result. Those civil disabilities which retarded their progress amongst the people, by narrowing the sphere of ministerial service, afforded more leisure for studious occupation, and rendered it incumbent upon them to use the press, quite as much as they had formerly used the pulpit. Goodwin, Owen, Howe, Caryl, and Clarkson, were the leading Independent divines of this period; but there were many who approached them by various degrees of excellency. Most, if not all of them, had enjoyed an university education; some, at an early period in the time of Charles the First; others, at a later period during the commonwealth; and not a few at Oxford, under the vice-chancellorship of Owen. Though dissenters, therefore, they appeared to advantage on a public stage. Their principles and their piety shone all the more conspicuously in consequence of the thorough training through which they had passed. Accurate scholarship, extensive reading, and logical

and philosophical habits of mind, fitted them to excel as writers, even more than as preachers, and gave them a name and prestige still entitled to veneration.

The judgment of Defoe respecting the comparative excellency of the nonconformist ministry of this period is confirmed by posterity. "The last age of dissenters," he writes, "was composed of those who, upon the restoration of the church discipline, and the Act of Uniformity, anno 1661, found themselves straightened in their consciences as to conformity with the ceremonies in worship, and hierarchy or government of the church of England. They joined together, formed separate congregations, and thus began to be called Dissenters. Their ministers were men known over the whole world; their general character was owned even by their enemies; generally speaking, they were men of liberal education, had a vast stock of learning, were exemplary in piety, studious, laborious, and unexceptionably capable of carrying on the work they had embarked in.

"As were the ministers, so, in a proportion, were the people; they were conscientious, diligent hearers of the word preached, studied the best gifts, encouraged, but not worshipped their ministers; they followed the substance, not the sound of preaching; they understood what they heard, and knew how to choose their ministers; what they heard preached, they improved in practice; their families were little churches, where the worship of God was constantly kept up; their children and families were duly instructed, and themselves, when they came to trial, cheerfully suffered persecution for the integrity of their hearts, abhorring to contradict, by their practice, what they professed in principle, or, by any hypocritical com-

pliance, to give the world reason to believe they had not dissented but upon a sincerely-examined and mere conscientious scruple.

"Among these, both ministers and people, there was a joint concurrence in carrying on the work of religion: the first preached sound doctrine, without jingle or trifling; they studied what they delivered; they preached their sermons, rather than read them in the pulpit; they spoke from the heart to the heart, nothing like our cold declaiming way, entertained now as a mode, and read with a flourish, under the ridiculous notion of being methodical; but what they conceived by the assistance of the great Inspirer of his servants, the Holy Spirit, they delivered with a becoming gravity, a decent fervor, an affectionate zeal, and a ministerial authority, suited to the dignity of the office, and the majesty of the work; and as a testimony of this, their practical works left behind them are a living specimen of what they performed among us: such are the large volumes of divinity remaining of Dr. Goodwin, Dr. Manton, Dr. Owen, Dr. Bates, Mr. Charnock, Mr. Pool, Mr. Clarkson, Mr. Baxter, Mr. Flavell, Mr. Howe, and others, too many to mention.

"It will be a sad testimony of the declining state of the Dissenters in England, to examine the race of ministers that filled up the places of those gone before, but more especially the stock springing up to succeed those now employed, and to compare them with those gone off the stage."*

This testimony, however high, is confirmed by all

* "The Present State of the Parties in Great Britain: particularly an Enquiry into the State of the Dissenters, etc. 1712," chap. vii.

the records of the period, as well as by the "large volumes of divinity" still "remaining." The piety of a previous age survived in the churches gathered by these worthy men, and was perpetuated to succeeding generations. Many of the Congregational societies now flourishing in various parts of England and Wales, date their origin from this time; and some of the buildings then erected for purposes of fellowship and worship, are, at the present day, occupied by the spiritual successors of the persecuted nonconformists of the period of Charles and James the Second. Those who composed such churches were men and women of great intelligence as well as piety, able to defend as well as to hold the truth, and in some instances of high rank. The church collected by Caryl at his own house in Bury-street, and which, after his death in 1673, was united with that collected by Owen, may be referred to in confirmation of the above statement. The united church consisted of more than one hundred and seventy persons, among whom were the following:—Lord Charles Fleetwood, Cromwell's son-in-law, whom Milton celebrates as "inferior to none in humanity, in gentleness, in benignity of disposition;" Sir John Hartopp, the intimate friend of both Owen and Watts, and whose character has been so beautifully delineated by the latter in his "Death and Heaven;" Lady Hartopp, the wife of Sir John, and daughter of Fleetwood; Major-General Berry, the friend of Baxter, until he became an Independent, and his family; Major-General Desborough, one of the well-known heroes of the commonwealth, and Cromwell's brother-in-law; Lord and Lady Haversham, the friends of Matthew Mead of Stepney, to whom Howe dedicated his funeral sermon for that

excellent minister; the Countess of Anglesea; and many other distinguished persons.*

Few churches, perhaps, were so flourishing as this; but many in various parts of the kingdom could boast of some persons of note connected with them, although in this season of persecution none were willing to share in their sufferings but the truly pious. When such men as Fleetwood and Hartopp were not above the reach of informers and magistrates, it was not likely that more humble individuals could escape the penalties of the law.† Indeed, in some places, such as Bristol, Shrewsbury, and Yarmouth, fines and imprisonment, and not infrequently death itself, awaited the profession of godliness in connexion with separatist principles. A great portion of the Broadmead Records is occupied with the narrative of those bitter persecutions which afflicted the dissenting churches, baptist, Independent, and presbyterian, in the city of Bristol.‡ Although the process was painful, the result was beneficial; and the churches of Christ were preserved in a state of great purity and order during the whole season of ecclesiastical tyranny.

The contrivances adopted to elude spies and informers, and more especially to screen their ministers from detection in the act of preaching, were such as to show how unrelentingly those noble confessors were persecuted, and how devoted they were to the interests of those who ministered to them in word and doctrine.

* Orme's Life of Owen, p. 277—285; Wilson's Dissenting Churches, I. 253.

† Fleetwood and Hartopp, and a few others, were fined at different times to the amount of six or seven thousand pounds. Noble's Memoirs, II. 333—348.

‡ In 1674, there were six dissenting churches in Bristol; three baptist, two Independent, and one presbyterian.

The Meeting house at Stepney, built in 1674, still exists, little altered from its original style in those internal arrangements which were intended to ensure secrecy in seasons of surprisal and intrusion. A trap door at the top of the gallery stairs leads to a suite of apartments over the ceiling of the spacious chapel, where the church was often accustomed to conduct its devotions in perfect retirement. One of those rooms, suitably furnished, is still used as a place for occasional worship.* The baptists at Bristol, in 1670, endeavoured to elude the Conventicle Act, by "breaking a wall, up on high, for a window, and putting the speaker in the next house to stand and preach; whereby," they say, "we heard him as well as if in the room with us."

The following statement, in the language of the same parties, will serve to bring their actual condition before us. "In order to prevent spies that might come in the room as hearers, and yet that no strangers might be hindered from coming into our meeting to hear the gospel, we contrived a curtain, to be hung in the meeting place, that did inclose as much room as above fifty might sit within it; and among those men, he that preached should stand; that so, if any informer was privately in the room as a hearer, he might hear him that spake, but could not see him and

* It is probable that before the Revolution, the chapel below was divided into various rooms, and occupied as a family mansion, which it still resembles in some degree. The two noble pillars sustaining the upper part of the building,—termed by Dr. Hamilton, in his Bicentenary Sermon, the *Jachin* and *Boaz* of this temple,—were not sent over from Holland till after the Revolution, a circumstance that favours the supposition. Matthew Mead was at that time the pastor of the church. Both he and Howe were refugees in Holland during the latter portion of this reign.

not know him. And there were brethren without the curtain, that would hinder any from going within the curtain, that they did not know to be friends; and so let whoso would come into our meeting, to hear without the curtain. And when our company and time were come to begin the meeting, we drew the curtain, and filled up the stairs with women and maids that sat in it, that the informers could not quickly run up.

"And when we had notice that the informers or officers were coming, we caused the minister or brother that preached to forbear, and sit down. Then we drew back the curtain, laying the whole room open, that they might see us all. And so all the people begin to sing a psalm, that at the beginning of the meeting we did always name we should sing, if the informers, or the mayor, or his officers come in. Thus still when they came in we were singing, so that they could not find any one preaching, but all singing. And we ordered it so, that none read the psalm after the first line, but every one brought their bibles, and so read for themselves; that they might not lay hold of any one for preaching, or as much as reading the psalm, and so imprison any more for that, as they had our ministers.

"Which means the Lord blessed, that many times when the mayor came in they were all singing, so that he knew not who to take away more than another. And so when the mayor, Hellier, or the other informers, had taken our names, and done what they would, and carried away whom they pleased, and when they were gone down out of our rooms, then we ceased singing, and drew the curtain again, and the minister, or brother, would go on with the rest of his sermon, until they came again, which sometimes they would

thrice in one meeting. This was our constant manner during this persecution in Ollive's mayoralty, and we were by the Lord helped, that we were in a good measure edified, and our enemies often disappointed.

"We taking this course, after a little while Mr. Weeks's people did so likewise; they shut up one of their doors, and instead of a curtain, they put a wainscot board, in a convenient place in their meeting, behind which he that spake did stand, out of sight of the greatest part of the people, and yet all might hear. And they suffer none to come into that part of the meeting but friends. And so, when the informers come, they had the convenience to convey him that spake out of that part of the meeting into another house.

"Brother Gifford's people took this course: a company of tall brethren stand about him that speaks, and having near his feet made a trap-door in the floor, when the informers come they let down the brother that spake into a room under. And so their conveniency led them to take that course, keeping one still at the door to give notice.

"Mr. Thompson's people were not so much followed by the informers, as the other three meetings for a while; nor indeed but little at all, in comparison with Mr. Weeks's meeting and ours: for we did so fill their hands, that before they could have done with us, their meeting ended.

"And so likewise Mr. Gifford's meeting was frequently sheltered by our two meetings, which lay as the frontiers of their assaults. But when the bishop's men did some week days follow Mr. Thompson's meeting, they likewise contrived ways to frustrate the informers, and to save their speakers, having lost

their minister as before. Now their meeting place being a lower room, and two lofts over head, one over another, they made a door to the stair foot into the second story, and made the minister stand in that middle room, and he so preached that they below and over might all hear. And they caused a curtain to be made, that, when the informers came in, they might draw that curtain before the ministers, that the informers could not see him that preached, but only hear him; and could not come at him, by reason the new door at stair-foot was kept fast, and none suffered to go up but those that they knew friends. And if they went to break open the door, before that could be done, they could from that second story convey the minister away into another house; and if they had timely notice, they would be all singing when the informers came, as we and Mr. Weeks's meeting did. These ways we took to maintain our meetings, and the Lord helped us." *

Such records as these impress the mind more powerfully than any general description with a sense of the severe hardships through which the nonconformists had to pass in those days of fine, confiscation, imprisonment, banishment, and martyrdom. Neither is it to be wondered at if any measure of indulgence, on whatever principle granted, was accepted with gratitude and joy.

Some of the controversies in which the Independents were concerned at this period are worthy of notice. The first to which we shall refer, is that

* Broadmead Records, pp. 226—228. See also Oliver Heywood's Life, for innumerable instances of a similar kind—some of them associated with most remarkable circumstances of preservation.

which originated with Samuel Parker's "Discourse of Ecclesiastical Politie, wherein the authority of the Civil Magistrate over the Consciences of Subjects in matters of external religion, is asserted; the mischiefs and inconveniences of Toleration are represented; and all pretences pleaded in behalf of Liberty of Conscience are fully answered. 1670." This production attacked the character and principles of the nonconformists with great virulence; inculcated slavish subjection to the civil magistrate in all things civil and religious; and represented dissent as incompatible with loyalty and good citizenship. Baxter was requested to reply to this scurrilous publication. Having taken so prominent a part in controversy already, and having acted as the representative both of the presbyterian and Independents in the Savoy Convocation, it was deemed right by Owen and the Independents that he should be applied to for this purpose. To the surprise of many he declined the task, on the ground that he was exempted from the reproaches cast on the nonconformists, and on the further ground, that if he were to answer Parker, he should come under the same odium as the rest of his brethren. On ascertaining this, Owen undertook the duty, and published an able reply, entitled "Truth and Innocence Vindicated; in a Survey of a Discourse, on Ecclesiastical Politie, &c." Several other publications appeared on the same side, the principal of which were "Insolence and Impudence triumphant;" "Toleration Discussed;" "Animadversions on a new Book, entitled Ecclesiastical Politie;" and "A Free Inquiry into the causes of that very great esteem the nonconformist ministers are in with their followers." The last of these publications is replete with proofs of the attachment

which subsisted between the nonconformist ministers and their flocks.

In the following year, Parker repeated his charge with increased malice, designating Owen the "great bell-wether of sedition and disturbance;" "the viper, so swelled with venom that it must either burst or spit its poison;" "a son of Belial," and "the greatest pest and most dangerous enemy of the church and commonwealth." Owen treated his antagonist on this occasion with silent contempt. His vindication had answered its purpose, and he left it to others to pursue the matter further. The controversy now took a new turn, in consequence of the interference of one of the most remarkable men of that age. Marvel, the friend and pupil of Milton, and an ardent republican and patriot, deemed this a seasonable opportunity for holding up to scorn the empty conceit and sycophant bigotry so common amongst the clergy of the Church of England. He replied therefore to Parker's work in a publication entitled "The Rehearsal Transposed." This pamphlet was almost the first specimen in this country of that kind of writing in which brilliant wit, combined with the most refined humour, supersedes the dryness and gravity of common place and solemn argument. It was completely successful. It was read by everybody at court, as well as in the families of the nonconformists, and always amidst peals of laughter. Marvel was speedily assailed with a shower of small missiles. He immediately issued a second part of the Rehearsal, which appears to have silenced his adversaries, and to have put an end to the discussion.

Another controversy in which the Independents were involved, originated with Dean Stillingfleet, in

1680. Before this period, many of the evangelical clergy had termed the nonconformists "our dissenting brethren," and had pretended to be very desirous of bringing about a "comprehension," which should unite episcopalians, presbyterians, and Independents, against the papists. Stillingfleet had taken an active part in the promotion of this design, and had spent much time on the subject in conference with Tillotson and Lloyd, Howe and Bates. Now, however, the altered state of parties had produced an entire change of spirit and tactics in the church party. That singular re-action in the domestic politics of the country, by which the Whigs had given place to a rampant Toryism, drifted along with it the religion and the charities of the established clergy. They protested, that although their fears of popery had not vanished, more evil was to be apprehended from schismatics and separatists, than from the most bigoted catholics. The pulpits of the establishment ceased to sound the alarm respecting a popish ascendancy, and echoed, instead, with violent invectives against the dissenters. On the second of May, 1680, Stillingfleet delivered a sermon in St. Paul's Cathedral, which he afterwards published, under the title ot "The Mischiefs of Separation." Having an eye to his own promotion, he fell in with the humour of the court; and, forgetting all his previous professions, attacked the nonconformists with great bitterness of spirit, representing them as schismatics, who were dangerous to the church, and enemies to the public peace. The spirit of the nonconformists was roused by this unlooked-for provocation. Howe, Owen, Baxter, Alsop, Barrett, and others, repelled the unjust charge, in publications of various merit. In the following year, Stillingfleet

replied at length to his opponents, in a bulky quarto volume, entitled, "The Unreasonableness of Separation; or, An impartial Account of the History, Nature, and Pleas, of the present Separation from the Communion of the Church of England." The book is valuable on many accounts, but chiefly on account of its historical references to the religious parties of that and preceding times. A considerable portion of the preface is occupied by a defence of the sermon already adverted to, and an attempted refutation of the replies it occasioned. Owen is thanked for his "civility and decent language." Baxter is pitied for his "anger and unbecoming passions." A third, whose name is not mentioned, is characterised as one who writes "more like a well-disposed gentleman, than a divine." A fourth, is designated "a sort of a wit," and his book is said to resemble "the bird of Athens, made up of face and feathers." This writer, who appears to be Vincent Alsop, gives the dean some trouble, however, by the mode in which he sets forth his argument.

The last respondent is said to attempt "to commit the rector of Sutton with the dean of St. Paul's." Stillingfleet, when rector of Sutton, published a work evincing "great tenderness towards the dissenters;" but no sooner is he promoted to be dean of St. Paul's, and one of his Majesty's chaplains, than he brands his old friends as schismatics. Stillingfleet admits his change of sentiments; but retorts on his opponent the fact that the divines of the Assembly had once opposed separation in the days of their intolerance, but were now separatists themselves.

It appears from the same preface that Stillingfleet was not without apprehensions that an Indulgence might

be granted once more; and by way of preparation for it, proposes very gravely the following conditions, which serve, better than any description, to show the spirit and temper of the now dominant party. According to these conditions, the indulged parties are to take the test against popery; to subscribe the thirty-six articles; to declare the particular congregations they are of, before commissioners authorised for that purpose; to be liable to severe penalties, if they speak or write against the established constitution of the Church of England; to pay all legal duties to the parochial churches; to be subject to the penalty of twelve-pence a Sunday for absence from church; to give an account to the bishops, of their rule of worship and discipline, and of the occupation and places of abode of all composing their congregations; and to promise "not to breed up scholars, or to teach gentlemen's sons university learning, because this may be justly looked upon as a design to propagate schism to posterity." * If such were liberal notions respecting what might be conceded in connexion with indulgence, what, it may be asked, must have been the condition of the dissenters at that time, when they were without it?

It cannot be denied, as Mr. Orme has justly observed, that "on the principles of many of his adversaries, the dean had the better of the argument." Not merely presbyterians, but Independents of the order of the Westminster Assembly, are fairly met on their own ground. After quoting a passage from the Apologetical Narration, in which Nye and his brethren admitted that the parochial congregations of the

* Unreasonableness of Separation, Preface, pp. lxxxv—lxxxviii.

Church of England were true churches, and their ministry a true ministry, Stillingfleet observes,—"This is a very fair confession from the dissenting brethren; but then the difficulty returns with greater force: how comes separation from these churches to be lawful? If they had gone upon the Brownists' principles, all the dispute had been about the truth or falsehood of them; but their truth being supposed, the necessity of separation followed: whereas now, upon alterating the state of the controversy by the Independents, though their principles seem more moderate, yet their practice is more unreasonable."* If the Independents had held anti-state church principles, such an argument as this might have been easily refuted; but as Owen, Howe, Goodwin, and most of those to whom Stillingfleet replied, were advocates of the principle of an establishment, the argument adopted was unanswerable.

Stillingfleet adopts the same reasoning, and with the same success, against the New England Independents. "Why," he asks, "had not Mr. Williams his liberty of separation as well as they? Why are no Anabaptists or Quakers permitted among them? Because these ways would disturb their peace, and distract their people, and in time overthrow their churches. Very well: but where is the entireness of the power of every single congregation the meanwhile? Why might not the people at Salem have the same liberty as those at Boston or Plymouth? The plain truth is, they found, by experience, this 'Congregational way' would not do alone, without civil sanctions, and the interposing of the pastors of other churches. For when Williams, and Gorton,

* Ibid, p. 55.

and Clarke, had begun to make some impressions on their people, they bestirred themselves as much as possible to have their mouths stopped, and their persons banished."*

We notice the line of argument pursued by Stillingfleet, for the purpose of showing that the principles of the Congregational Independents were not merely speculatively but practically defective. When they were in power during the Commonwealth, their imperfect views led them into a false position in relation to the State; and now that they were persecuted, the same views laid them under a disadvantage in meeting the reasonings of their opponents. Owen replied to Stillingfleet with great ability, and, on some portions of the subject, with signal success; but the main argument, derived from the concessions and previous practices of both presbyterians and congregationalists, remained untouched and unanswerable. The acumen of an Owen, and the catholic spirit of a Howe, were alike inadequate to the vindication of the separatists, except on the principles advocated by the thorough Independents.

The controversy still proceeded, involving Wall, Barret, Lobb, Baxter, Humphrey, Rule, Sherlock, and others, in the conflict. The most important works produced by it were those of David Clarkson, a minister of great learning and most unobtrusive piety, and lately associated with Owen, as his co-pastor, at Bury-street. Leaving the general argument to others, he selected particular portions of Stillingfleet's book, relating to Diocesan Episcopacy and Liturgical services, and replied to them in several publications of permanent value. These were, "No Evidence for

* Ibid, p. 295.

Diocesan Churches;" "Diocesan Churches not yet discovered in Primitive Times;" "Primitive Episcopacy;" and "The Use of Liturgies." These writings display immense erudition, and contain unanswerable evidence and arguments on the subjects on which they treat.*

It is interesting to know that John Locke, the profoundest philosopher of that day, was not uninterested in this controversy.† From Lord King's life of this illustrious man we learn, that he wrote a work of some length in reply to Stillingfleet. Unhappily, it has never been published; but the extracts furnished by his biographer indicate, as might be expected, the liberality of his views at this period. The following may serve as a single but sufficient specimen. "As to the law of the land," he says, "it can never be judged a sin not to obey the law of the land, commanding to join in communion with the Church of England, till it be proved that the civil magistrate hath a power to command and determine what church I shall be of; and therefore, all the specious names, established constitution, settled church, running through all the doctor's sermon, and on which he seems to lay so much stress, signify nothing, till it be evident the civil magistrate has that power. *It is a part of my*

* They have been lately reprinted in the second volume of the Wycliffe Society's publications.

† He was at this time in Holland, having been expelled from the University of Oxford in 1684, on account of the liberality of his sentiments. John Milton, after publishing his "Paradise Lost and Regained," and his "Treatise of True Religion, Heresy, Schism, Toleration, etc.," died during this period, in 1674. Thus one star rose as another set. There is abundant proof in Lord King's admirable biography that Locke was a thorough Independent.

liberty as a Christian, and as a man, to choose what church or religious society I will be of, as most conducing to the salvation of my soul, of which I alone am judge, and over which the magistrate has no power at all."*

It was during this reign, that the county of York had the honour of witnessing the institution of the first dissenting academy, in 1665. Richard Frankland, of Bishop's Auckland, and Vice-President of Durham University in Cromwell's day, retired to a small village in the district of Craven after the Restoration. The name of this village was Rathmill. Frankland possessed a small estate there, and opened an academy at his own cost, in 1665. The Five Mile Act precluded all dissenters from "teaching any public or private schools, or of taking any boarders or tablers to be taught or instructed," unless they took the oath which the Act prescribed. In spite of this prohibition, Frankland opened his academy, and although compelled to remove it from place to place in consequence of the vexatious proceedings of his persecutors, he succeeded in carrying it on until his death, in 1698. Three hundred students are said to have received instruction under his care; some of them the leading ministers of a succeeding age, and amongst the rest, Timothy Jollie, who conducted the academy at Attercliffe after his death, with great success.

Such an event as this deserves to be minutely recorded; but we are compelled by our limited space to pass by this and many other interesting details in the history of the Independent body, and to confine our narrative to matters of a more general nature.

* Life of John Locke, vol. II. 195—219.

We now proceed to the reign of James the Second, which, although brief, was very eventful, not merely in relation to our subject, but to the welfare of the kingdom at large, and which prepared the way for that season in which the fruits of the civil war were to be gathered. To all appearance, the throne of James was as secure when he ascended it as that of any former monarch. He had triumphed over his enemies before his accession, and when he was proclaimed, a satisfaction less violent, but more deep, than that which attended the restoration of his brother, was everywhere manifested. The only thing that diminished public confidence was the well-known fact that James was a catholic.

An opportunity was now afforded of giving a practical illustration of the common boast of Roman Catholic writers, that their ecclesiastical system is compatible with any and every form of civil polity. James, an avowed catholic, who celebrated Roman Catholic rites in his palace, and gathered Roman Catholic confidants around his person, had now an opportunity of showing how far his religion fitted him to rule according to law. The Tories were entirely devoted to his views. Everything was prepared to hand. The disposition to rule over the British people according to law and equity was alone wanting.

The reign of James divides itself into three epochs, each of which may be considered an act in the great drama of the Revolution. The first, was the period in which he directed all the forces and agencies of the state towards the persecution of the nonconformists. The second, was the season in which he attempted, by hypocritical measures affecting liberty of conscience, to pave the way for the establishment of the Roman

Catholic religion. The third, was the brief hour in which the detected conspirator against the liberties of the British people sought to cover his confusion and conceal his rage by acts of presumption and folly, which pushed him farther into danger, until he lost crown and all.

To narrate, with anything like distinctness, the principal passages in the history of this troubled, but deeply interesting, period, would demand large space.* All that we propose is a brief statement of those events which served to develop and illustrate the principles and aims of the Independents.

In the commencement of his reign, instigated by the Tories, who had carried the elections in their own favour against the Whigs by overwhelming majorities, he directed a virulent persecution against the dissenters. The penal laws were executed without mercy. While the Whigs had little or no power, and in many instances were driven for refuge to the Continent, the prisons were filled with nonconformist martyrs. Baxter was one of the first to suffer. His trial before the notorious Jeffreys has often been described.† He was regarded as the leader of the nonconformists, or, as Jeffreys expresses it, their "mighty Don." The aims of the court party were indicated by the language of that living embodiment of judicial integrity, on seeing Dr. Bates at Baxter's side. "There is a doctor of the party at your elbow," said he; "but, by the

* Although in some points venturing to differ from so high an authority as Mr. Macaulay, it would be ungenerous not to express grateful satisfaction at the impartial spirit in which the "History of England, from the Accession of James the Second," has been composed; while the composition itself is beyond all praise.

† See Orme's Life of Baxter for the fullest account.

grace of God Almighty, I will crush you all." The imprisonment of Baxter was the prelude to a fierce persecution against all recusants, both in England and Scotland. In the latter country it was enacted, on May the 8th, 1685, that whoever should preach in a conventicle under a roof, or should attend, either as preacher or hearer, a conventicle in the open air, should be punished with death, and confiscation of all his goods. The horrors of that persecution under which so many had suffered at the hands of Claverhouse, were now to be repeated, if circumstances did not prevent; and the warfare against the sectaries, commenced by James in Scotland before he ascended the British throne, would have been extended to England, if his sinister aims, and the state of laws and parties in England, had not prevented.

The Monmouth insurrection, which was soon suppressed,* stimulated the government of James to a fierce and cruel behaviour, unparalleled in the annals of cruelty. Thousands of wretched victims were either massacred by Kirke's soldiers, or more cruelly butchered, in the name of law and justice. The "bloody assizes" can never be forgotten. In September, 1685, Jeffreys, with four other judges, and countenanced by the troops in the districts through which his course lay, set out on the western circuit. In every county

* The Duke of Monmouth was a natural son of Charles the Second. He presumed upon his legitimacy, and, led by foolish counsellors, invaded England in June, 1685. He landed on the 11th, at Lynn, in Dorsetshire; six days before Argyle, who had conducted a similar expedition in Scotland, was captured at Inchanan. The people in Dorsetshire and Somersetshire gave Monmouth a cordial welcome, as they would have welcomed any one promising relief in such a season. Monmouth's followers were soon routed, and himself captured on the 7th of July.

innumerable victims awaited him, some of whom had been implicated in the insurrection, but many of whom were dragged before his bar, and tried and executed on the most trivial grounds. The Lady Alice, widow of John Lisle, one of Cromwell's lords, and a commissioner of the Great Seal, in the days of the Commonwealth, was one of his first victims. She had given refuge to two outlaws, the one a nonconformist minister, and the other a lawyer. After a barbarous trial, in which the jury had thrice brought in a verdict in her favour, she was ordered to be burnt alive. Her friends interceded with James for her, but all in vain. The utmost that could be obtained, although she was eighty years old, was a commutation of her sentence from burning to beheading. This happened at Winchester. In Dorchester, seventy-four were hung. In Exeter, the number of judicial victims was fewer. But in Somersetshire, two hundred and thirty-three were hung, drawn, and quartered. Many of those who suffered were obnoxious on account of their religion. The language of Jeffreys on many occasions was sufficient to show the spirit in which he entered upon his judicial campaign. "I will tell you," he said, during the trial of Lady Alice, "there is not one of those lying, snivelling, canting presbyterians, but, one way or another, has a hand in the rebellion. Presbytery has all manner of villany in it. Nothing but presbytery could have made Dunne such a rogue. Show me a presbyterian, and I will show thee a lying knave." On another occasion he exclaimed, "Protestant!—you mean, presbyterian! I'll hold you a wager of it. I can smell a presbyterian forty miles!"

Some of the victims showed great firmness in meet-

ing their fate. Abraham Holmes, an old Commonwealth soldier, walked to the gallows with a manful air and smiling countenance, and prayed fervently that God would hasten the downfall of antichrist; and as he went up the ladder, apologized for mounting so awkwardly. "You see," said he, "I have but one arm!"

Deep interest was excited by the fate of two brothers, William and Benjamin Hewling, grandsons of William Kiffin, one of the first merchants of London, and generally considered as the head of the baptists.* William Hewling, who was only nineteen, suffered death with so much fortitude, that an officer who had made himself conspicuous by his ferocity and rudeness, was strangely melted, and said, "I do not believe that my lord chief justice himself could be proof against this."

There was some hope that Benjamin would be pardoned. His rich and influential relation interested himself deeply in his behalf. Jeffreys, from covetous motives, inclined to lenity, and time was allowed for an appeal to James. The prisoner's sister, introduced by Churchill, went to Whitehall with a petition. "But do not flatter yourself," said Churchill, "with hopes. This marble is not harder than the king." The application was useless. Benjamin Hewling suffered death with triumphant confidence in Christ, and amidst the sobs and tears of the beholders,

* Kiffin was born in 1616, and apprenticed to the redoubtable John Lilburne. He joined an Independent church when twenty-two years of age; became a rich citizen; served as lieutenant-colonel in the militia; and by his influence did much to encourage nonconformity during the reigns of Charles and James. See Orme's Remarkable Passages in the Life of William Kiffin, &c. 1823.

in which the soldiers of the guard appeared to have joined. The circumstances attending the execution of these young men made a deep impression on the public mind.

Besides those who suffered death, eight hundred and forty-one were transported to the West Indies. This place was fixed upon as their place of destination rather than New England, because they were for the most part puritans, and would have found sympathy amongst men whose religious views were identical with theirs. They were regarded as slaves, and actually sold in the slave-market. The Tories of the western counties, and the courtiers of Whitehall, competed against one another for the gain arising out of this traffic. Many died on the passage; and those who arrived alive at the scene of bondage, were so much weakened and reduced, that it was necessary to fatten them, before they could be sold.

The property of these unfortunate men was divided amongst the informers. The agents of Jeffreys enriched themselves with bribes, procured from those to whom they promised pardon; and Jeffreys himself received, from one person alone, fifteen thousand pounds. With this sum he bought an estate, known among the people afterwards, on that account, by the name of "Aceldama." In one transaction of this nature, William Penn, the well-known leader of the Quakers, appears to have been implicated in such a manner, as does not comport with the ordinary opinion respecting his integrity and benevolence.*

In all these proceedings, James was more than a silent party. Jeffreys corresponded with him during

* See Macaulay's account of the "little girls" of Taunton,—Hist. of England, vol. i. pp. 655, 656.

his circuit, and was promoted to the Great Seal of England, on his return. A similar course of cruel procedure was adopted in London, towards the Whig merchants and citizens. The coffers of the government were replenished by the fines and confiscated property of some of the most honourable men of London. Cornish, who had filled the offices of alderman and sheriff, was hung in King Street, for having been concerned in the Rye-house plot, of which, however, no evidence was produced. It was sufficient that he was a Whig and a nonconformist. John Fernley, and Elizabeth Gaunt, suffered death for harbouring and conniving at the escape of John Burton, another supposed Rye-house conspirator. Fernley was hung and Elizabeth Gaunt was burned, at Tyburn. The sufferings of the latter,—a charitable and compassionate woman, whose life had been spent in administering consolation to others, and who anticipated the character of a Howard and a Mrs. Fry, by her continual visits to the jails,—were intense. She endured them with Christian fortitude, calmly disposing the straw about her, so as to shorten her agonies. A tempest, similar to that which burst forth at the time of Oliver Cromwell's death, arose during her martyrdom, unroofing the houses, tearing the ships from their moorings, and bearing witness against the iniquity of the proceedings of that day.

"Never," says Mr. Macaulay, "not even under the tyranny of Laud, had the condition of the puritans been so deplorable as at that time. Never had spies been so actively employed in detecting congregations. Never had magistrates, grand jurors, rectors and churchwardens, been so much on the alert. Many dissenters were cited before the ecclesiastical courts.

Others found it necessary to purchase the connivance of the agents of the government by presents of hogsheads of wine, and of gloves stuffed with guineas. It was impossible for the sectaries to pray together, without precautions such as are employed by coiners and receivers of stolen goods. The places of meeting were frequently changed. Worship was performed sometimes just before break of day, sometimes at dead of night. Round the building where the little flock was gathered together, sentinels were posted, to give the alarm, if a stranger drew near. The minister, in disguise, was introduced through the garden and the back yard. In some houses there were trap doors, through which, in case of danger, he might descend. Where nonconformists lived next door to each other, the walls were often broken open, and secret passages were made from dwelling to dwelling. No psalm was sung; and many contrivances were used to prevent the voice of the preacher, in his moments of fervour, from being heard beyond the walls. Yet, with all this care, it was often found impossible to elude the vigilance of informers. In the suburbs of London, especially, the law was enforced with the utmost rigour. Several opulent gentlemen were strictly searched, and distresses were levied to the amount of many thousands of pounds. The fiercer and bolder sectaries, thus driven from the shelter of roofs, met in the open air, and determined to repel force by force. A Middlesex justice, who had learned that a nightly prayer-meeting was held in a gravel pit about two miles from London, took with him a strong body of constables, broke in upon the assembly, and seized the preacher. But the congregation, which consisted of about two hundred

men, soon rescued their pastor, and put the magistrate and his officers to flight. This, however, was no ordinary occurence. In general, the puritan spirit seemed to be more effectually cowed at this conjuncture, than at any moment before or since. The tory pamphleteers boasted that not one fanatic dared to move tongue or pen in defence of his religious opinions. Dissenting ministers, however blameless in life, however eminent for learning and abilities, could not venture to walk the streets for fear of outrages, which were not only not repressed, but encouraged, by those whose duty it was to preserve the peace. Some divines of great fame were in prison. Among these was Richard Baxter. Others, who had, during a quarter of a century, borne up against oppression, now lost heart, and quitted the kingdom. Among these was John Howe. Great numbers of persons who had been accustomed to frequent conventicles repaired to the parish churches. It was remarked that the schismatics who had been terrified into this show of conformity, might easily be distinguished, by the difficulty which they had in finding out the collect, and by the awkward manner in which they bowed at the name of Jesus."

During these proceedings, the church of England looked coldly on, and scarcely uttered a single remonstrance. When it had the power, at least to mitigate the severity exercised towards so many worthy men, it refused to employ it. In a short time, the same church found occasion to call in the aid of the nonconformists against the monarch and his arbitrary designs; and those who had suffered so much, forgot their wrongs in the higher principle of patriotism by which they were moved. Whether the conduct of the nonconformists during the reign of James the Second was right

or wrong, no one can charge them with being actuated by a selfish or vindictive spirit.

Towards the close of 1685, the king commenced preparations for bringing the country round to the papal supremacy.* He had already granted commissions to unqualified persons. The court and the army were crowded by Roman Catholics. He now announced his determination to have the Test Act repealed; by parliament, if possible, but if parliament proved refractory, by prerogative. At the same time he determined to maintain a standing army, and to suspend, if not to repeal, the Habeas Corpus Act, at this time the safeguard of the liberties of the country. The revocation of the edict of Nantes by Louis, which was followed by a wide-spread persecution of the Huguenots in the south of France, appeared to give him displeasure, and called forth a royal declaration, expressive of his disapproval; but in a short time, his conduct towards the refugees in England proved that his pity was altogether feigned. Although parliament by successive measures, some of which were greatly to their credit, endeavoured to thwart his designs, they were at present unsuccessful. The dismissal of Halifax from the king's councils, the nomination of ministers suited to his purposes, the exercise of the dispensing power for the purpose of preferring Roman Catholics to ecclesiastical offices, the conversion of the Act of Supremacy into an instrument of government, and the creation of a new court of High Commission in 1686, indicated clearly enough the despotic and papis-

* His speech in parliament, November 9th, 1685, was the first indication of his aims. "The History of King William the Third, 1702." vol. I. p. 40.

tical designs of the monarch. Great alarm was already excited by these high proceedings, and the church of England now feared those measures of retaliation, which had been practised in the reign of Queen Mary.

The protestant party, however, was too strong to admit of an immediate accomplishment of the royal aims. Therefore, under the direction of Father Petre, James determined to divide the protestants if possible, by playing off the nonconformists against the church of England in his own favour. The precise character of his measures, and the conduct of the nonconformists in respect to them, demand particular notice.

On the 18th of February, 1687, he issued his Proclamation for Liberty of Conscience in Scotland, granting Toleration to Moderate Presbyterians and Quakers, and suspending all Laws and Acts of Parliament against Roman Catholics. The Privy Council of Scotland having acquainted his Majesty in the course of a few days that "his commands were exactly obeyed," he was encouraged to follow the same plan in England. On the 18th of March, he assembled his Privy Council, and made known his resolve "to issue out a Declaration for a general Liberty of Conscience to all persons of what persuasion soever." His reasons for this step were of the wisest nature. He had observed, he said, that although an uniformity in religious worship had been endeavoured to be established in the successive reigns of four of his predecessors, yet it had proved altogether ineffectual; that the restraint upon the consciences of dissenters had been very prejudicial to the nation, increasing, rather than lessening their number; that nothing could conduce more to the peace and quiet of the kingdom, than an entire liberty of

conscience; and that it had always been his opinion, as most suitable to the principles of christianity, that no man should be persecuted for conscience sake.*

This speech having met with no opposition from the council, on the 4th of April he issued the memorable Declaration for Liberty of Conscience, in the preamble of which, he avowed his wish that all his subjects were members of the Catholic church; but since that was not the case, it was his opinion that conscience ought not to be constrained. He then stated that he thought fit to issue this Declaration of Indulgence; making no doubt of the concurrence of his two Houses of Parliament, when he should think it convenient for them to meet. In the body of the Declaration he promised to maintain the church of England, as by law established, in the full enjoyment of all its professions and rights; but declared that all penal laws for nonconformity should be suspended, and that the oaths of Supremacy and Allegiance, and the Tests provided in the Acts of Parliament made in the 25th and 30th year of his brother's reign, should not hereafter be required.†

Eight prelates supported the king in his present measure; but their servility or their vices were such as to bring nothing but dishonour to his cause. The clergy of the church of England generally, put themselves into a posture of firm, though passive resistance. Notwithstanding the oaths they had taken, and the lessons they had inculcated respecting implicit obedience to the monarch, they were now foremost in the ranks of rebellion,—a somewhat clear indication of the sincerity of their previous conduct. James expressed his astonishment, and gave vent to his disappointment, not without some rhetorical point. "The

* Ibid. p. 89. † Ibid. pp. 91, 92.

church of England," said he, "resists liberty of conscience, well knowing that in the field of free discussion she would be the first to lose ground."

Opposed by the Church, and determined to carry his point, the king now endeavoured to secure the support of the great body of the nonconformists, presbyterians, Independents, baptists, and quakers, who, together with the papists, constituted a considerable portion, if not a majority of the nation. He reasoned correctly, that if he could secure their united support to his measures, he might bid defiance to his opponents. There was good ground, to a person not understanding the actual character of some of these parties, for expecting that they would fall in with his proposals. The immediate result of the royal indulgence was a great relief to the entire body of nonconformists. The intolerant and persecuting Acts of Parliament, under which they had suffered, were now suspended. Many who had been banished from their homes, and almost from society itself, and who had been compelled to wander from place to place as outlaws in their native land, now returned, without fear of molestation, to their relatives and friends.* Thousands came forth from their imprisonment to the enjoyment of a liberty which had not been known for many years. Large numbers in every city and town in England, who had been compelled to hold their religious meetings in secret, and under constant apprehension of intrusion from spies and informers, as well as of harsher measures from officers of justice, could now walk with a cheerful countenance to their humble meeting-house,

* It was at this period that John Howe returned from Utrecht, at the earnest persuasion of the church at Silver Street.

and pursue their worship in peace. It was only to be expected that such parties as these would gratefully accept the immunity now offered, and that few would inquire respecting the motives which had brought about so desirable a change.

It is very difficult in the present day to determine what the dissenters ought to have done at such a crisis. If they could have joined together in a grateful acceptance of the royal boon, taking it as a natural right of which they ought never to have been deprived, and at the same time urging it upon parliament to give a form of legality to a measure so just, and so entirely in harmony with those promises which had been made the ground of the Restoration; none could have accused them of any impropriety. By such conduct the general liberty of the subject might have been advanced, and the exclusive privileges of the church of England, which to this day are a necessary abridgement of the rights of British subjects, might have been withdrawn, while laws and provisions more just than those of the Toleration Act, might have been embodied in Acts of Parliament. The principles irrefragably established by Locke, in his Letters on Toleration, might henceforth have become the basis of the civil and religious constitution of the kingdom. Nor is it so apparent as some have deemed it to be, that a Popish ascendancy would have been the result of such conduct. Let it be admitted that the ultimate purpose of James was the establishment of such an ascendancy; that his professions of tolerance were hypocritical; that he was essentially a bigot; and that as soon as a favourable opportunity arrived, he would have endeavoured to cancel the indulgence, and to compel conformity to the Romish system of worship.

Even in that case, the enactment of just laws might have forestalled him in his aims, and have rallied round the parliament such an overwhelming majority of the nation, as might have disconcerted his sinister aims. But whether such might have been the consequences resulting from such a course, or not, it does not become us to blame those who were its advocates at that time; neither is it just to affirm that they necessarily took a narrow view of the demands of the age upon their patriotism. Admitting with Mr. Macaulay, that "the evil arising from the intolerant laws which previous parliaments had framed, was not to be compared to the evil which would be produced by a transfer of the legislative power from the parliament to the sovereign;" it is not so evident, as his putting of the case would make it appear, that this was the necessary alternative. It was the bigotry of the church of England alone, a bigotry which had been growing for many years, that prevented it from acceding to the king's proposals. If he had demanded an addition to the penal code, for the purpose of rendering the position of the nonconformists, if possible, worse than before, they would unhesitatingly have complied with his wishes. Why might not such measures have been enacted as would have embodied the Declaration of Indulgence, without conceding to the monarch the ascendancy of the Roman Catholic party? The position of the country would have been rendered all the more secure against sinister designs of that nature, by the very concession.

Whatever the opinions entertained respecting this matter, now that all the facts of the case are before us, it does not become us to judge severely those dissenters who accepted the indulgence with gratitude,

and endeavoured to promote the measure by their influence and example. At first, all sections of nonconformists expressed their thankfulness for the royal proclamation. Vincent Alsop represented many amongst the presbyterians. William Penn took the lead amongst the quakers. Stephen Lobb interested himself on behalf of the Independents. And the baptists in various parts of the country, expressed their opinions by several resolutions and addresses. None of these men merit the imputations cast upon them by the latest of our historians. It may be that they confided too easily in the promises of the monarch, and were too credulous respecting his sincerity. It may be also that they were not sufficiently aware of the ulterior designs of James, and assisted him in carrying out his project without imagining that they were furthering the aims of a despotic prince. But there is no evidence to prove that they had allied themselves with the jesuitical party, for the purpose of undermining the constitution and laws of the country. All that they desired was the realization of those civil and religious rights of which the nonconformists had been deprived for so many years.

Stephen Lobb, for example, was a man who stood high with his own party, not only at this period, but afterwards, even down to the time of his death in 1699. He used what interest he had for the advantage of the dissenters, "wherein," says Mr. Pierce, "he seems to me to deserve much commendation, unless our adversaries can tax him on good evidence with anything done amiss.*" It is true he had free access to the king; but that can hardly be judged a crime by those who

* Pierce's Vindication of the Dissenters, part I., p. 265.

are always ready to avail themselves of such a privilege. It is also true that he advised the king to persevere in his attempts to procure the repeal of the penal laws against the dissenters; but even this cannot be charged against him as a fault, unless it can be shown that he had some sinister end in view. This, however, has never yet been done.* The charges recently made against him,—that he "now went as far in servility as he had ever done in faction," that he "joined the Jesuitical Cabal," and "lived with a splendour to which the puritan divines were little accustomed,"—are, to say the least, highly exaggerated. It cannot be proved that he was "factious" before, or "servile" now; and the "splendour" of his mode of living at this period, which Mr. Macaulay has stated on the authority of a writer little worthy of trust,† must have been limited to those seasons when he happened to be at court. If Mr. Lobb and the dissenters lived a little better than formerly, their adversaries need not have envied them; for since they were discharged from their livings about five and twenty years before, most of them had lived plainly enough.‡

While the nonconformists wavered,—hardly know-

* Mr. Macaulay says that he was "weak, violent, and ambitious." Mr. Wilson, on the authority of Goodwin, Lobb's colleague, says, "He was of an excellent, benign temper, rarely provoked to anger; of great strength of mind; a great master of the art of reasoning; and of a most benevolent disposition."

† Nichols's Defence of the Church of England, p. 109. For a particular account of Lobb, see Wilson's Dissenting Churches, III. 436—446.

‡ Pierce, p. 269. For an account of the controversy between Nichols and Pierce, see Bogue and Bennett's Hist. of the Dissenters, III. 202, 203. Nichols wrote in Latin, in order to "misrepresent the Dissenters abroad."

ing how to act, courted on the one hand by the bishops and clergy of the church and on the other by the king, a publication entitled "A Letter to a Dissenter, upon his Majesty's late gracious Declaration of Indulgence," and of which twenty thousand copies were circulated by post, is said to have had great influence in determining the minds of many. It was an appeal to expediency rather than principle, and set in a strong light the probable results of both sides of the alternative before them. "The Church of Rome," said the author of this pamphlet, "not only dislikes your liberty, but by its principles, cannot allow it. They are not able to make good their vows; nay, it would be a habit of sin requiring absolution. You are, therefore, now fondly embraced, only that you may be the more effectually squeezed afterwards. To come so quick from one extreme to another is so unnatural a motion that you ought to be on your guard; the other day you were sons of Belial, now you are angels of light. Popery is now the only friend of liberty, and the known enemy to persecution! We have been under shameful mistakes if this can be either true or lasting. You have formerly very justly blamed the church of England for going too far in her compliance with the court; conclude, therefore, that you must break off your friendship, or set no bounds to it. The church is now convinced of its error in being too severe with you. The next parliament will be gentle to you. The next heir is bred in a country famous for indulgence. There is a general agreement of thinking men, that we must no more cut ourselves off from foreign protestants, but enlarge our foundations, so that all things conspire to give you ease and satisfaction if you do not too much

anticipate it. If protestants, of all sorts, have been to blame in their behaviour to each other, they are upon equal terms, and for that very reason ought now to be reconciled." *

Twenty-four answers to this able letter were published, few of which seemed to make much impression on the public mind, already prepared in feeling, if not on principle, to sympathize with the church of England. Some of the most influential among the dissenters, both presbyterian and Independent, gave expression to their mistrust of the king's proceedings, and even ventured to avow their attachment to the established church. Baxter availed himself of the indulgence, but refused to join in any address of thanks to his majesty.† Howe, on the first publication of the declaration, was as much gratified as his people, and returned from exile with great joy. Some time afterwards he hesitated what course to pursue. On one occasion James sought an interview with him on the subject, and solicited his support; but he excused himself by affirming that he had no desire to meddle with state affairs.‡ At length, however, he decided against the dispensing power, and influenced

* Brooks' "History of Religious Liberty," vol. ii. pp. 149, 150. Calamy's "Continuation, etc." vol. i. Ded.

† Baxter was released from prison in 1685. He appears to have been much enfeebled at this time. Orme's "Life," pp. 468, 486.

‡ An anecdote is mentioned respecting a conversation between Howe and Sherlock, in which Howe seems to have conceded, that if James had deprived the church clergy, and given their places to dissenters, he would have yielded; but, at the same time, that he would have conveyed the emoluments to the legal proprietor. The latter portion of his statement appears to have wonderfully pleased Sherlock and the clergy.

many of his brethren to do the same. Bunyan and Stennett, and many of the baptists, were also opposed to the proceedings of the king, and when it became more apparent than at first, that he had the advancement of the Roman Catholics chiefly, if not exclusively, at heart, very few even of those who had at first espoused his interest continued firm in their attachment. The secret also came out that William, Prince of Orange, was prepared to espouse the cause of protestantism and liberty, and to come over from Holland with a large army for the purpose of supplanting the king. In proportion as this became confidently reported, the church party and the nonconformists drew nearer together, in a firm determination to lend him their support as soon as the crisis should arrive.

Such was the relative position of the two parties into which the Independents were divided. It is difficult to say which was in the right; or, rather, it would be just to affirm that, on their respective grounds, both acted consistently with their own principles and aims—the one accepting, as a matter of justice, yet with thankfulness, that toleration which ought never to have been withdrawn; and the other protesting against it, on account of the manner in which it had been granted—the one, confiding in the declaration of the king as sincere; the other distrusting that declaration as hypocritical—the one, hoping that parliament might be induced to lend its sanction and a form of legality to the acts of the monarch, as it had virtually done in former cases, when violent prejudices had not intervened; the other confidently believing that parliament would do no such thing, because of its prejudices and fears, and therefore per-

suaded that the best course, all things considered, would be to ally itself with the church of England.

It so happened that those who took the latter view were favoured by the course of events. The Prince of Orange, looking wistfully towards England, not altogether free from ambitious projects of his own, and quite prepared, when circumstances should favour, to occupy that position of influence which the possession of the British throne would give, was an instrument prepared at hand for carrying out the designs of the church of England party. He was ready, whenever the time should arrive, to follow the example of Argyle and Monmouth by an invasion of England; and although, unlike them, he was too prudent and too sagacious to make a descent upon the British territory at an unfavourable season, without sufficient force, and without provision against mischance, yet it must be reckoned amongst the possibilities of the case that his expedition might have failed. We know that it did not. Everything appeared to favour his project. The infatuation of James, no less than the compacted union of the protestants, seemed to conspire with the very elements in furtherance of the great revolutionary movement. And when James left his throne vacant, and William the Third occupied his place, it seemed an easy matter, in the light of realized events, to affirm that the one class of Independents were right and the other wrong. As there is no arguing against an unfulfilled prophecy, so there is little hope of securing much approval for a line of policy not favoured in its results by fact.

But suppose that the invasion of the Prince of Orange had been an ill-concerted, mismanaged, unseasonable measure, and had met with the fate of

previous invasions; suppose that the winds, which on one occasion scattered his fleet, had actually destroyed it, or that after his invasion James by prompt steps had discomfited him; suppose that, instead of proving a revolution, the protestant movement had been suppressed as a rebellion; which class of Independents, in that case, would appear to have acted, not merely in a right, but in the most politic manner?

In judging of parties, it seems only right that contingencies of this nature should be taken into account. Neither do we see any reason why Stephen Lobb, William Penn, and those who acted with them, may not have been moved by aims as patriotic as the bishops and clergy of the church of England, and the great majority of the protestant dissenters. It seems more than probable that, if at this time the church party and the parliament had yielded to the king in respect to toleration, it might have been accomplished with such a grace and in such a manner as to have prevented all possibility of a Roman catholic ascendancy.

Such reasonings as the above, however, although not set aside in estimating the character of parties, are rendered somewhat nugatory by the light of history. James, thwarted by the bishops of the church of England, and disappointed in his expectations from the dissenters, became increasingly infatuated, and advanced steadily on to his own ruin. He acted spitefully towards the nonconformists, because they did not comply with his wishes; invaded the privileges of the universities; prosecuted first the clergy and then the bishops of the church of England; filled the court and the army with papists; endeavoured, by bribery and an infringement of the rights of corporations, to secure parliaments after his own heart; alien-

ated from him all parties, except the papists, not even excluding those who had once favoured his plans; renewed his Declaration of Indulgence in such a manner as to throw off all disguise respecting his ulterior aims; and, when the season came, fell from his pride of place, the detected and vanquished foe both of the civil and religious liberties of the people of England.

The Restoration prepared for the Revolution. The reaction of 1660 included no guarantee for the nation's freedom; and, being pushed to an extreme by the arbitrary measures of the court, led the people to hail with joy the foundation of a new constitution in 1688. If the great men of the Commonwealth period had survived, they would have found themselves amply vindicated, after twenty-eight years' renewed experience of the cruelty, tyranny, and insincerity of the Stuarts, by beholding William and Mary firmly seated on the British throne.

CHAPTER IV.

INDEPENDENCY AND THE REVOLUTION; OR DURING THE REIGNS OF WILLIAM THE THIRD, AND QUEEN ANNE. 1688—1714.

WILLIAM the Third was in his fortieth year when he ascended the British throne. In person he was by no means prepossessing. A thin, pale cheek, a firm and peevish mouth, a thoughtful and somewhat sullen brow, marked the repulsive features of his character; but an ample forehead, and penetrating eye, indicated his capacity for the position to which he had been advanced. He was endowed by nature with most of the qualities essential to a great ruler. His early life, his education, and the theological opinions he had formed, fitted him in a great measure for the post of honour now opened to him; and his constancy of character was such that not merely his own immediate adherents, but the nation at large, could reckon with some degree of certainty upon the policy he would pursue.

The interest now taken in the character of William is chiefly derived from the part which he filled in the Revolution, and the determination with which he adhered to his promises respecting the nonconformists. At a time when the Whigs had few notions of freedom beyond their own sect and party, and when religious intolerance was likely to resume its wonted power, the personal firmness of the king was the only thing

that prevented the church of England from waging the old war of persecution. Frequent attempts were made in the course of his reign to break the promises which had been made, by the now dominant party, in the time of James the Second; attempts which would have been successful but for the inflexible disposition of the king.

At the same time it must be admitted that neither William, nor the great body of the nonconformists, entertained thoroughly enlightened views respecting the rights of conscience. When the dissenting ministers of London approached his Majesty shortly after his ascension, with an address of congratulation, they not only promised unfeigned fidelity and true allegiance to his Majesty's person and government, but expressed their "desire and hope" that he would be pleased to establish, by his wisdom and authority, a firm union of his Protestant subjects in matters of religion, by making the rule of christianity to be the rule of conformity. "Our blessed union," they said, "in the peace and purity of the gospel, will make this church a fair and lovely type of heaven, and terrible to our anti-christian enemies. We do assure your Majesty, that we shall cordially embrace the terms of union which the ruling wisdom of our Saviour has prescribed in his word." William's reply was in accordance with the request. "I take kindly your good wishes," he said, "and whatever is in my power shall be employed for obtaining such a union among you. I do assure you of my protection and kindness." In his address to parliament, the king gave utterance to the same desire: "I shall now put you in mind of one thing, which will conduce much to our settlement, as a settlement will to the disappointment of our ene-

mies. I am, with all the expedition I can, filling the vacancies in offices of places of trust, occasioned by this late revolution. I hope you are sensible that there is a necessity of some law to settle the oaths to be taken by all persons to be admitted to such places: I recommend it to your care, to make a speedy provision for it. And, as I doubt not you will sufficiently provide against Papists, so I hope you will leave room for the admission of all Protestants, who are willing and able to serve you. This conjunction in my service will tend to the better uniting you amongst yourselves, and the strengthening of you against your common adversaries."*

In all these addresses, defective views were embodied on the great question of liberty of conscience. The dissenters, no less than the monarch, put themselves into a false position. The former had evidently lost ground, so far as principle was concerned. The reasons which James the Second had published as the basis of his Declaration of Indulgence, were inconceivably more just than those which now moved the united denominations in their address to the throne. The various attempts which had been made to bring about a comprehension had done much to produce this result. Owen, and the divines of the Westminster Assembly, were all deceased. But their defective views respecting religious establishments were perpetuated; and, as is generally the case under such circumstances, when the favourable opportunity arrived, practical results of an injurious nature attended their operation. John Howe, whose catholicity of spirit, indubitable genius, theological attainments, and

* Kennet, vol. III, pp. 517. 518. Mackintosh's Hist. of England, VIII. 312.

integrity of character, were such as to cover the imperfection of his principles respecting the great question of religious liberty, was now the most prominent leader amongst the Independents. His exile had not improved his views, and his occasional conformity to the church of England had exerted an influence in a wrong direction over those who looked up to him as a model. The consequence was that, excepting those whose sentiments were regarded as extreme, both Independents and Presbyterians were now in a worse position than before. The part they had taken in the recent Protestant movement had contributed in some measure to this result. When men are very anxious to conciliate, in order to act in concert with those from whom they differ on the broad ground of principle, it is almost certain that principle, in one direction or another, will be held in abeyance, if not actually departed from.

Very different from the sentiments expressed in their address, were the enlightened views published by John Locke at this time. His first letter on Toleration, dedicated to the celebrated Limborch, was published in Holland in 1689. It was written in Latin, but translated into English during the same year. The second and the third letters were published, respectively, in 1690 and 1692; but the great principle of Toleration, or rather of religious liberty, is amply developed in the first. The following exposition of the views of this enlightened and philosophical mind, will not be out of place in a work of this nature.

"The toleration of those who differ from us in matters of religion," says he, "is so agreeable to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and to the genuine reason of

mankind, that it seems more than strange for any professed Christian, not to perceive clearly both its necessity and advantage. It is certainly the duty of the civil magistrate, by the impartial execution of equal laws, to secure to all his subjects, in general, and to every one in particular, the just possession of these things which belong to this life. If any one presume to violate the laws of public justice, established for the preservation of these things, his presumption is to be checked by the fear of punishment, consisting in the deprivation or diminution of those civil interests or goods, which otherwise he might and ought to enjoy. But, seeing no man willingly suffers himself to be punished by the deprivation of his goods, much less of his liberty or life; therefore is the magistrate armed with the force and strength of all his subjects, for the punishment of those who violate any other man's rights. That the whole jurisdiction of the magistrate extends only to *civil* matters; that all civil power, right and dominion, is lauded and confirmed to these things *only;* and that it neither can nor ought in any manner to be extended to men's *religious* concerns, or the care of their *souls*, the following considerations seem abundantly to demonstrate.

"The care of souls is not committed to the civil magistrate, any more than to other men. It is not committed to him by God; since it does not appear that God has ever given any such authority to any one man for another, so as to compel any one to be of his religion. Nor can any such power be vested in the magistrate by the consent of the people; because no man can so far abandon the care of his own salvation, as blindly to leave it to the will of any other, whether prince or subject, to prescribe to him what faith or wor-

ship he shall receive. No man can, if he would, conform his faith to the dictation of another. All the life and power of true religion consists in the inward and full persuasion of the mind. Whatever profession we make, or whatever outward worship we observe, if we are not fully satisfied that the one is true, and the other well-pleasing to God, such profession, and such practice, so far from being any furtherance, are indeed great obstacles to our salvation; yea, they add to the number of our other sins—those of hypocrisy, and the contempt of God.

"The cure of souls cannot belong to the civil magistrate, because the whole of his power consists in *outward force:* but true and saving religion consists in the inward persuasion of the mind, without which nothing can be acceptable to God. Such is the nature of the human understanding, that it cannot be compelled to the belief of anything by outward force. Confiscation of estates, imprisonments, or any other torments, can never be sufficiently efficient to make men change the judgment of their minds. The magistrate, it is acknowledged, may make use of arguments, draw the heterodox into the way of truth, and so promote their salvation; but this is a prerogative common to him with other men. In teaching, instructing, and reclaiming the erroneous and the vicious, by sound reason and kind persuasion, he may certainly do what becomes any good man to do. Magistracy does not oblige him to put off either humanity or Christianity. But it is one thing to persuade, another to command: one thing to press with arguments, another with penalties. This, the civil power alone has a right to do; to effect the other, good-will is sufficient authority. Every man is furnished with

a commission, provided he has ability, to admonish, exhort, convince, and draw men to the truth: but to give laws, receive obedience, and compel with the sword, belongs to the magistrate alone. But the magistrate's power extends not to the establishment of any article of faith, or forms of worship, by the force of his laws. For laws are of no force without penalties, and penalties, seeing they cannot convince the mind, are absolutely impertinent. As penalties are unable to produce belief, or move the conscience, so it is light and evidence alone that can work a change in men's opinions—can move their hearts to approbation; and that light and evidence can in no case proceed from corporal sufferings or any other outward penalties. All the power and penalties of the magistrate are confined to men's *civil* interests, or the concerns of this world, and have nothing to do with the worship of God, and the world to come." *

It would have been well for that age if such views as these had been received and acted upon. But there were few who regarded the subject in so clear and just a light, and yet fewer who were resolute in acting according to their best convictions. Party feeling, rather than reason and principle, moulded the policy of all the great parties in the state.

It was by no means easy when the constitution was settled, to obtain a parliamentary recognition, even of the partial views cherished by the king. He proposed the removal of the Sacramental Test, which disqualified protestant dissenters, as well as papists; and endeavoured on several occasions to promote a scheme of comprehension, which would open the doors of the

* Locke's Works, v. 5—54; Brooks' History of Religious Liberty, II. 205—207.

establishment to many who could not at present conform. But he was opposed by majorities in both Houses, and the embittered state of parties prevented the accomplishment of his aims. The Test Act remained as before; and during many successive reigns drew a line of demarcation between churchmen and dissenters, greatly to the disparagement of the latter. The comprehension scheme was regarded by many enlightened persons as dangerous both on political and ecclesiastical grounds.* If it had passed, many good nonconformists might have been embraced within the pale of the establishment; but the ranks of dissent would have been considerably thinned and weakened. The church party were short-sighted in resisting a measure which would have strengthened the church; but their successful opposition has been over-ruled to the advancement of the cause of truth and justice.

The great achievement of William's reign was the Act of Toleration, which after passing both Houses without any serious opposition, received his assent on the 24th of May, 1689. This act, although imperfect in many of its provisions, is memorable in the ecclesiastical history of England, and forms an epoch in the annals of religious emancipation. It may still be regarded as the *Magna Charta* of our religious freedom, and the basis of a large portion of our civil liberties.

The statute is entitled "An Act for exempting their Majesties' Protestant subjects dissenting from the Church of England from the penalties of certain laws." After rescinding many penal statutes enacted at different periods since the accession of Queen Eliza-

* Mackintosh's "History of England," vol. viii. p. 3, 20.

beth, so far as they related to Protestants dissenting from the church of England, this act requires them to take the oath of allegiance, to declare their abhorrence of the pretended power of the pope to depose princes, and to subscribe the articles of religion, except the thirty-fourth, thirty-fifth, thirty-sixth, and these words in the twentieth :—"The Church hath power to decree rites or ceremonies, and authority in controversies of faith." The baptists are exempted from subscribing part of the twenty-seventh article, respecting infant baptism; and the quakers are required to declare their fidelity to King William and Queen Mary, their abhorrence of the pretended papal power, their firm belief of the doctrine of the trinity, and that the holy scriptures are of divine inspiration. Under these conditions, dissenters from the church of England, having their places of assembly registered, are allowed and protected in the public worship of Almighty God; but all Roman Catholics, and all who deny the doctrine of the Trinity as declared in the articles of the church of England, are excluded from the least share in the benefits of the act.*

Such are the provisions of this celebrated statute. Although so palpably imperfect, the dissenters of that day received it as a great boon, and for many generations it was considered the most liberal act on the statute book in respect to matters ecclesiastical. The London ministers of all denominations put themselves immediately under its protection, by signing the doctrinal articles of the church, and returned devout thanksgivings for the great privileges they now enjoyed.

* The entire Act will be found in Bogue and Bennett's History of the Dissenters, i. 187—198.

In consequence of the agitations of party, the selfish intrigues of Whigs and Tories, and the continual attempts of the abdicated king to effect his own restoration, the reign of William the Third was to a great degree unsettled. In 1692 and 1696, plots to assassinate the king were discovered, which, but for an over-ruling Providence, might have brought about a counter-revolution.

William was true to his promises to the dissenters, so far as the state of parties would admit. He regarded them as his best friends. Through his intimacy with Howe and Matthew Mead, before the revolution, he became better acquainted with the party than is often the case with monarchs: nor was the comparison which he made between the dissenters and the church of England, to the disparagement of the former. They were ever loyal and peaceable, although earnest in seeking the advancement of their liberties; and he could repose quite as much confidence in them as in those who preached up the divine right of kings, but frequently illustrated their doctrine in so remarkable a manner.

Some changes took place during this period in the relative position of the Independents and presbyterians. Before the Restoration, a considerable movement, although of a gradual character, had been made, towards an union, if not an amalgamation, of the two bodies. In Lancashire, Yorkshire, Worcestershire, and several other counties, associated meetings had been held, as the result of the persevering endeavours of Baxter and Howe. Immediately after the Revolution, the leading ministers of the two denominations in London united on a common platform of faith and order. A document, entitled "The heads of agree-

ment assented to by the united ministers, formerly called presbyterian and congregational," was drawn up in 1691, from which it would appear that the presbyterians were quite another race of men from those who composed the majority of the Westminster Assembly. As Neal observes, they had "abandoned their servile doctrines, and appeared in defence of the civil and religious liberties of mankind, upon the most solid and general principles." They gave up their "rigid" views respecting synodical power, and admitted that "every congregation is to be governed by itself;" that none should be admitted as members of particular churches, but such persons as are sound in the fundamental doctrines of the christian religion, and "credibly professing cordial subjection to Jesus Christ." In one of the articles of agreement, it is affirmed, "that each particular church hath a right to choose their own officers; and being furnished with such as are duly qualified and ordained according to the gospel rule, hath authority from Christ for exercising government, and of enjoying all the ordinances of worship, within itself."

Thus the presbyterians had given up the most essential feature of their system, as a kind of necessary result of the character of their fellowship and worship during the persecutions of the Restoration period, when they were compelled by circumstances to act in a congregational manner. At the same time it is apparent from the same heads of agreement, that the two denominations, although now more closely united than before, retained their peculiarities on some minor points. In one of the articles, for example, we find the following words:—"In the administration of church power, it belongs to the pastors and

other elders of every particular church, *if such there be*, to rule and govern, and to the brotherhood to consent, according to the rule of the gospel." And in another we find the following: "Whereas divers are of opinion, that there is also the office of ruling elders, who labour not in word and doctrine, and others think otherwise, we agree that this difference makes no breach among us." By this time, the congregationalists generally had changed their opinion respecting the distinction between the pastor and teacher; and, with few exceptions, had come to regard the pastor and elder as one and the same person. As early as 1652, Mr. Woodall, of Woodbridge, had objected to being appointed teacher in distinction from pastor, on the ground that he could not see any precedent for the distinction in the word of God; and a little later, Drs. Owen and Goodwin, in their letters to the church at Norwich, through Mr. Asty, gave it as their opinion, that the distinction was nominal rather than essential. A particular account of the various views entertained on these subjects in the eastern counties will be found in the miscellaneous works of the late Rev. T. Harmer.

On the death of William, March the 8th, 1702, Queen Anne, the favourite daughter of James the Second, ascended the throne. It is difficult to describe her character, since there was so little worthy of notice. Some have affirmed that she had none, while others have described her as "a good sort of woman." Still, notwithstanding her high-church zeal, she is said to have disliked punishment; and although her reign of twelve years was "radiant with the lustre of arms" and statesmanship, her domestic

* Mackintosh's History of England, IX. 149.

government was bloodless.* In a literary point of view, her reign was one of the most illustrious. It was the age of Somers, and Addison, Bolingbroke, Swift, and Pope. At the same time, it was the age of re-action, if not of counter-revolution. Although the Jacobites remained quiet during her reign,* the high-church party were very determined in their attempts to discountenance and persecute the dissenters.

In 1702, a bill, called the Occasional Conformity Bill, was introduced to parliament, the professed object of which was to prevent hypocrisy in religion, and danger to the church; but the real object of which was to nullify the Toleration Act, and give the church of England a more stringent monopoly. It passed the House of Commons; but was so much opposed and altered in the House of Lords, that it was allowed for the present to drop through.

Although defeated on this occasion, an attempt was made, in 1705, to revive the measure. The cry of "The church in danger" had been previously raised by the Tory party, and, on the sixth of December, a debate on the ecclesiastical position of the country occurred in the House of Lords, in which Lord Rochester, accepting the challenge of Lord Halifax, endeavoured to prove the perilous condition of the church. He referred in evidence to the establishment of presbytery in Scotland, and the absence of an act against occasional conformity in England. Sharpe, Archbishop of York, and the Duke of Leeds, took the same side; the former asking for the strong arm of the state to put down the seminaries maintained by dissenters, and the latter declaring that the queen had expressed her

* James the Second died at St. Germains, in 1701, and his son James succeeded him in his pretensions to the British crown.

approval of the Occasional Conformity Bill. On the other side, bishops Burnet and Patrick resisted the intolerant proposal, and Hough, bishop of Lichfield, charged the universities with sowing the seeds of dissension in the community, by inoculating their pupils with the spirit of intolerance and bigotry. Lord Wharton laid bare the real motives of the promoters of the measure by saying, "In all that I have read and heard, I can find but one fact,—that the Duke of Buckingham, the Earl of Rochester, and the Earl of Nottingham, are *out of place.*"

Happily, the bill was lost, by a majority of sixty-one to thirty, and for the comfort of the good people of England, it was voted, that the church of England was safe and flourishing; and that all who gainsaid it were enemies to the church, the queen, and the kingdom.

The manly conduct of De Foe, during this period, contributed to bring about a change in the sentiments of many influential persons, as well as of the people. During the previous attempt to pass the Occasional Conformity Bill, he published a political squib, entitled, "The Shortest Way with the Dissenters," the object of which was, to hold up to ridicule the petty persecution of the high-church party. After reviewing the severities practised against the dissenters in previous reigns, he recommends that instead of fining and imprisoning them, they should in future hang their ministers, and banish their people. "To talk," said he, "of five shillings a month for not coming to the sacrament, and one shilling a week for not coming to church, was such a way of converting people as never was known. It was selling them a liberty to transgress, for so much money." This sixpenny pamphlet produced a great ferment in Church and

State: churchmen and dissenters were alike deceived by it. The former were delighted with the author's proposal; and the latter began to prepare for martyrdom at Tyburn and Smithfield. Government at length advertised a reward for the author, who delivered himself up, and assured them that the whole was a joke. This so enraged the parties concerned, more especially those who had been too dull to perceive his humour, that it was resolved to give him the full benefit of the law. On the 24th of February, 1703, he was indicted at the Old Bailey sessions, and found guilty of a libel. He was then sentenced to pay a fine of two hundred marks to the queen; to stand three times in the pillory; to be imprisoned during the queen's pleasure; and to find sureties for his good behaviour for seven years. This infamous sentence brought more dishonour on the court than upon De Foe. He was guarded to the pillory by the populace, as if about to be enthroned; and descended from it amidst the triumphant acclamations of the multitude. Imprisoned afterwards, his spirit remained unbroken. During the confinement he wrote his "Hymn to the Pillory," and many other pieces; and in his after life he contributed more than any other individual to restrain the violence of anti-constitutional principles, and to secure for dissenters their civil and religious rights. His pen was that of a ready writer on all subjects, and in every style, grave or humourous, caustic or elegantly polished, as circumstances might require. His numerous productions were of essential service to the cause of patriotism and liberty. Undaunted by persecution, his whole life was a continual warfare against tyranny and priestcraft; and his memory deserves to be cherished, not merely on

account of the fictions which have interested so many minds, and which are likely to do so to the remotest posterity; but because of the noble manner in which he sought to advance the liberties, and to promote the prosperity of his countrymen.*

In 1708, the position of the dissenters became somewhat perilous. The enemies of civil and religious liberty began to exert their baneful influence at court, and the queen was drawn into a plan to support measures subversive of the Protestant interest. At the same time the foreign policy of the government tended to eclipse the previous lustre of her majesty's reign. The citizens of London, influenced in their proceedings by the dissenters, addressed their representatives in a letter drawn up by Mr. Stennet, a Baptist minister, expressing their alarm, and urging it upon their representatives to be faithful to their trust.

A little later, or in 1710, some disgraceful outrages were committed upon the dissenters, by mobs of infuriated people, instigated by the Tory and high-church party. The immediate occasion of this conduct, was the trial of Dr. Sacheverell. This ecclesiastical firebrand was found guilty; but the sentence was so lenient, that his friends considered it a victory, and procured illuminations and processions throughout the whole country. In many parts of England and Wales, the dissenters were annoyed and maltreated, and in some, their places of worship were destroyed.

But the sufferings of the dissenters by lawless mobs were only the beginning of sorrows. It was the object of the Tories to crush them entirely. Advantage

* Memoirs of the Life and Times of Daniel De Foe, etc., by Walter Wilson, Esq., vol. II., pp. 51—69.

was taken of the Act passed in the thirteenth year of Charles the Second, which prescribed that every schoolmaster should conform to the church of England. This Act had not been repealed by the Toleration Act; so that dissenting schoolmasters were still exposed to its penalties. Many vexatious and malicious prosecutions were now carried on against them; and the attempt was made, under cover of this Act, to prevent the dissenters from continuing their educational institutions.

In 1711, the Bill to prevent Occasional Conformity, after three rejections by the House of Lords, was revived by Lord Nottingham, and carried through both Houses without resistance. Nottingham told the Whigs that their concurrence with him would enable him to detach a host of Tories from the ministry; but that, "without it, he was as one man." They were selfish enough to acquiesce; and met with a just retribution. Nottingham deceived them; and they lost the hold they once had on the dissenters.*

In 1714, the House of Commons became the stronghold of a rampant toryism. Bolingbroke was now rising into power, and anxious to curry favour with the high-church party, in order to carry out some of his nefarious and traitorous measures. It has been affirmed, with some degree of probability, that in anticipation of the queen's death, he was laying his plans for the restoration of the pretender, in opposition to the determination of parliament respecting the Hanoverian succession. Under his auspices, a bill was introduced to parliament, known by the name of the Schism Bill, the object of which was to prohibit dissenters from conducting collegiate institutions and

* Mackintosh's Hist. of England, IX. 69. Ivimey, III. 70.

schools, or even educating their own children; and at the same time, to deliver up the mind of the nation to be trained by the clergy of the established church. The bill was introduced by Bolingbroke's friend, Sir William Windham, chancellor of the exchequer; and supported by the secretary Bromley, Hungerford, a branded lawyer, and Collier, a low attorney, who had become director of one of the theatres, without virtue, character, or fortune; whom Bolingbroke first admitted to the intimacy of his dissipations, and afterwards got returned to the House of Commons. This person, in his zeal for the church, knew not where to stop; and, seeking to cast odium upon the dissenters, charged upon them ribaldries so blasphemous, or indecent, that the Tories disavowed and silenced him. The chief opponents of the Schism Bill were Walpole, who compared it to an edict of Julian the Apostate against the primitive Christians; Lechmere, who said the church was indebted to schism for two of its great champions, Oxford and Bolingbroke; and Stanhope, in whose speech there is a gleam before its time of Whig reason and liberality:—"Instead of making," said he, "new laws to restrict domestic and encourage foreign education, I could wish those against Jesuits mitigated, and allowance made to them to have a certain number of schools." So strong was the hold of intolerance upon the House of Commons, and so just were the calculations of Bolingbroke on the Commons and on human nature, that the Schism Bill was carried by a majority of 273 to 126.

The bill was now brought up to the Lords by Windham, and adopted in that house by Bolingbroke. That celebrated person vindicated it in a strain which

has been charged upon his principles as a philosopher, and should be charged on his want of principles, moral or political, as a statesman. He disclaimed persecution, and admitted that indulgence should be granted to the errors and prejudices of education and habit; but asserted the right of the state to check the propagation of those prejudices and errors "to come." He thus adopted the formula of persecution upon which spiritual hierarchies were wont to stretch religious consciences in the worst times. He said with them, "Truth is ours, and all must bend to it," and thus chained down truth, reason, knowledge, and that license of philosophical speculation, in which he afterwards professed it his happiness to indulge. Several Whigs spoke, and the whole party voted against the bill. "I am," said Wharton, "very agreeably surprised to see some men of pleasure, of a sudden, become so religious as to set up for patrons of the church." It was also opposed by Nottingham, who took occasion in his speech to avenge himself on Swift's pleasantries and personalities, with little credit to his candour or dignity. "My lords," said he, "I have many children, and I know not whether God Almighty will vouchsafe to let me live to give them the education I could wish they had: therefore, my lords, I own I tremble when I think that a certain divine, who is hardly suspected of being a Christian, is in a fair way of being a bishop, and may one day give licenses to those who shall be intrusted with the instruction of youth."*

The bill was carried, although not without protest on the part of thirty-three peers, five of whom were bishops. The dissenters then presented a firm yet

* Mackintosh's Hist. of England, IX. 319—321.

temperate memorial to the Queen, which was printed and circulated in an octavo pamphlet of thirty-nine pages. It was an admirable document emanating from the three denominations, and presented in the name of the whole body; but the Queen was so infatuated by high-church counsels, that it had no effect. On the 25th of June the Schism Bill received the royal assent.

Happily for the dissenters, who at this time amounted to more than a million of people, * her Majesty died on the very day on which the Act was to have come into operation. The 1st of August is worthy of being commemorated by protestant dissenters, as the anniversary of a providential deliverance as important as that commemorated by the Jews in their days of *Purim*.†

* The memorial itself affirms this.

† Esther ix. 28.

CHAPTER V.

INDEPENDENCY UNDER THE HOUSE OF BRUNSWICK; OR, FROM THE ACCESSION OF GEORGE THE FIRST TO THE REIGN OF QUEEN VICTORIA. 1714—1837.

According to the Act of Settlement, Prince George of Hanover was now proclaimed king of England; to the great joy of all true Protestants, not in England merely, but throughout Europe. Whatever the views entertained respecting his Majesty's private character, he proved a friend to liberty, and a determined foe of those who endeavoured to filch back the toleration that had been conceded. He came to the throne just in time to prevent a reaction, which might have proved detrimental for ages to the civil and religious interests of Independents, and of all nonconformists. On this account his name deserves to be held in lasting veneration.

In this, our concluding chapter, we propose to take only a general view of those public events which illustrate the position of the Independents, during this and the succeeding reigns. Our circumscribed limits prevent us from entering into details.

During the whole period of the Guelphic dynasty, the interests of Protestant dissenters have enjoyed the favorable regard of the monarch; and the ministers of the three denominations—Independents, Presby-

terians and Baptists—have ever been permitted to approach the throne on important public occasions. The language of George the First on his first arrival in this country, is an apt expression of the spirit generally evinced by succeeding rulers down to the present time "I take this occasion," he said, "to express my firm purpose to do all that is in my power for supporting and maintaining the churches of England and Scotland, as they are severally by law established; which I am of opinion may be effectually done without the least impairing the toleration allowed by law to Protestant dissenters, so agreeable to Christian charity, and so necessary to the trade and riches of the kingdom." *

Scarcely had George the First been seated on the throne, when the Tories promoted a rebellion in favour of the son of the late James the Second, commonly known as the Pretender. Riots and tumults were stirred up in various parts of the kingdom; and Tory peers, as well as many of the clergy of the church of England, secretly favoured the agitation. The cry of these bigots was,—"The church in danger—No foreigners—No presbyterians—King James the Third," etc. Through their violence, many of the nonconformist places of worship were demolished. The London ministers, including the Independents, presented an address to his Majesty on this occasion, expressing their prayer to be permitted to enjoy their civil rights, and to profess their own religious sentiments without molestation. "We have been always ready to assist the church of England," they said, "in defence of the Protestant religion, when in real and imminent

* The Declaration of the King in Council, September, 22nd, 1714.

danger. Nor know we any other reason why we have suffered the outrage of papists, non-jurors, and other disaffected persons, but that they were sure we were a body of men fixed in our duty to your Majesty, and lay the most exposed to popular insults. We look upon ourselves as bound by the strongest ties of duty, gratitude, and interest, to acknowledge and maintain your Majesty's undoubted right and title to the imperial crown of these realms; and to declare our utmost abhorrence of all attempts, either at home or abroad, in favour of a popish Pretender." Not a single Protestant dissenter joined in the rebellion. On the contrary, many of them suffered in consequence of their known determination to resist it; and the answer of the King to their address,—an answer which greatly provoked the high church party,—proved unequivocally the gratitude cherished by the king towards his loyal subjects. "I am very much concerned," said he, "at the unchristian and barbarous treatment which those of your persuasion have met with in several parts of my kingdom; and care shall be taken that a full compensation shall be made them for their sufferings. I thank you for this address, and you may be assured of my protection." At the same time both houses of parliament complied with the king's promise, and enacted a law for the punishment of those who might be inclined to repeat the conduct recently observed towards the nonconformists. * This law was a great security from that time against outrage and violence, and tended very much to the protection of the dissenters. It enacted, "That if any persons riotously and

* At Oxford, Birmingham, Bristol, Chippingham, Reading, Norwich and other places, the dissenters were insulted, and their places of worship burned to ashes. Gough, iv. 165; Bogue and Bennett, iii. 122.

tumultuously assembled together, to the disturbance of the public peace, and did unlawfully, and with force demolish or pull down, or begin to demolish or pull down any church or chapel, or any building for religious worship certified and registered according to the Act of Toleration, the same shall be adjudged felony, without benefit of clergy; and the hundred where such tumult is committed, shall answer for damages, as in cases of robbery."

Encouraged by the manner in which they had been protected both by king and parliament, the dissenters now endeavoured to advance their liberties by seeking a repeal of those acts which were in force against them. On the 26th of March, 1717, more than two hundred members of the House of Commons met in conference, to discuss the propriety of aiding the dissenters in their object; and in November the king pleaded their cause with great earnestness. In his address at the opening of parliament he observed, "As none can recommend themselves more effectually to my favour than by a sincere zeal for the just rights of the crown and the liberties of the people; so I am determined to encourage all those who act agreeably to the constitution of these my kingdoms, and consequently to the principles on which my government is founded." Considering themselves a large and influential party that ought not to submit quietly to the indignities put upon them by the laws, they called meetings in various parts of the kingdom; from nearly all of which the opinion was returned, that not only the acts against Occasional Conformity and Schism, but the Test Act also ought to be repealed. The king was anxious that their object should be obtained; but recommended them, through the excellent Lord Barrington, one of their number

not to insist upon the last at present. With this recommendation the dissenters generally complied. On the 13th of December, Earl Stanhope moved to bring in a bill repealing the law against Occasional Conformity and the growth of Schism, and some of the clauses in the Corporation and Test Acts. A warm discussion ensued. The high church party, including the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, were violent in their opposition. After many struggles the advocates of the bill agreed to leave out the clauses relating to the Corporation and Test Acts. The bill then passed by a large majority, and received the royal assent on the 17th of February, 1719.

Dr. Hoadley, bishop of Bangor, who had warmly defended the dissenters during the recent debates in parliament, and who, by various publications of a liberal kind had offended the high church party, was now persecuted by his own church. A Convocation was called, which condemned the writings of the bishop, as tending to subvert all government and discipline in the church, and to impugn the regal supremacy and the legislative authority in matters of religion. On this occasion the king proved himself a friend to the church, by sending a writ to the archbishop of Canterbury, commanding him to prorogue the convocation from the 10th of May to the 19th of November following. This was a death-blow to the power of the convocation, which from that time to the present has only been suffered to meet and disperse as a matter of form. The controversy arising out of the persecution of Dr. Hoadley involved many parties, the dissenters amongst others, and occasioned an admirable letter by James Pierce, of Exeter, entitled, "The Dissenters' Reasons for not Writing in Behalf of Persecution," in reply to Dr. Snape. In the

course of his letter he observed, "If we have not yet learned to abhor persecution, it must be confessed that the high church party has not yet treated us sufficiently severely. Our principles are, as we hope, the most friendly to mankind; amounting to no more than those of a general toleration to all peaceable subjects, universal love and charity for all Christians, and to act always in matters of religion as God shall give us light in his will about them." *

Many acts of persecution, attempted during this reign, more particularly under cover of the Test Act, were resisted by the dissenters with considerable spirit; and a bill which had been brought into the Upper House for the suppression of blasphemy and profaneness, but which would have proved a restriction upon liberty of speech on the doctrines of Christianity, was thrown out by a great majority. An act was also passed for the relief of the Quakers, by altering their affirmation to the following words—"I solemnly, sincerely, and truly affirm and declare;" and in 1722, bishop Atterbury, an unrelenting foe to the dissenters, who had declared during the debate on this measure, that "he did not know why indulgence should be given to a people who were hardly Christians," was degraded and banished the realm for conspiracy against the crown, and died in exile ten years afterwards.

It was immediately after this that the *Regium Donum* originated, an act by which the king evinced his regard for the dissenters; but which, besides creating dissatisfaction at the time by the manner in which it was received and distributed,† led to many injurious reflections upon the consistency of the dis-

* Dissenters' Reasons, etc. London, 1718.

† Ivimey's History of the English Baptists, vol. III. p. 175.

senters, more especially when converted into a parliamentary grant some years afterwards.

On the 22d of June, 1727, while on his way to Hanover, George the First died. His memory is worthy of being cherished with lasting regard by the descendants of those whose liberties he protected on so many occasions, and whose rights he would have advanced to a much larger extent had it not been for the opposition of party. The maxim which he adopted on coming to the throne was signally illustrative of his conduct towards the dissenters—"Never to abandon my friends, to do justice to all the world, and to fear no man."

George the Second ascended the throne under favourable circumstances. He was in the prime of life, accustomed to the public business, and a favourite with the people. The Whig party hailed him as a parliamentary king; and even the Tories, who had regarded his father as an usurper, dropped much of their enmity to the son, and allowed him quietly to seat himself on the British throne. The dissenters, especially, congratulated themselves on the accession of a monarch who held patriotic as well as protestant principles, and who promised them the protection they had previously enjoyed.

The king had an early opportunity of putting his promise into practice. In 1727, Dr. Doddridge—a name still held in veneration by all Christian men—was the tutor of a dissenting academy at Northampton. The clergy in his neighbourhood, envying his position, and desirous of preventing the dissenters from educating their young people in the principles of nonconformity, commenced a prosecution against him for the purpose of enforcing the penalties of the unrepealed act already referred to, which prohibited

conscientious dissenters from keeping school. The case was made known to the king. He immediately put an end to the prosecution by the exercise of his prerogative, declaring that "there should be no persecution for the sake of conscience during his reign." On several occasions his majesty interfered for the protection of this excellent man.*

On the eleventh of July, 1727, the presbyterians, Independents, and baptists, living within ten miles of the cities of London and Westminster, formed themselves into a body, known from this time as The Three Denominations. They had been accustomed, ever since the Revolution, to unite on public occasions, more especially for the purpose of approaching the throne. They now formed themselves into a society, to be managed by a committee, consisting of seven presbyterians, six Independents, and six baptists. Important service was rendered to the dissenting interest, by this union of parties, during this and succeeding reigns.

Having now enjoyed a season of comparative ease, and deeming it desirable to secure further advantages, many dissenters commenced an agitation for a more unrestricted liberty of conscience than was at present granted by the laws. On the 9th of November, 1732, the secretary of the three denominations summoned some of the leading laymen amongst the dissenters, to take into consideration the propriety of seeking the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts. Lord Barrington and several others assembled at Silver Street; and on ascertaining, by a committee appointed to make the necessary inquiries, that their friends in parliament did not deem it advisable to make the attempt at that time, it was determined that the

* Ivimey, III. 196.

object should not be lost sight of, but that there should be an annual choice of dissenters from every congregation, to look after the civil affairs of the dissenters. The Committee of Deputies originated in these circumstances; the first meeting being held on the 14th of January, 1736. Another attempt was made to introduce a Bill for the Repeal of the Test Act, in 1738; but the enemies of liberty were too powerful, and rejected the motion by a majority of 188 to 89. Walpole's conduct on this occasion was peculiarly reprehensible, and betrayed a degree of exasperation unworthy of his character and position. A deputation of dissenters having waited upon him, Dr. Chandler, their leader, reminded him of his frequent assurances of good will to their cause. Walpole returned the usual answer, that, whatever his private inclinations, the time had not yet arrived. "You have so repeatedly given that answer," said Chandler, "that I trust you will give me leave to ask, when the time will come?" "If you require a specific answer," replied the minister, "I will give it you in a word—never!"

Some attempts were made in an early part of this reign to revive the powers of the convocation; but his Majesty, who was as much opposed to priestcraft as his father, prorogued and ultimately dissolved their meeting. Many parties also, holding sceptical opinions, came over to the side of liberty, and joined with the dissenters in advocating an extension of civil rights. In one point of view, this kind of co-operation was detrimental to the interests of a body whose regard for religion was even stronger than that which they cherished for liberty: but there was no reason why even the most sceptical should not be tolerated as well as themselves; and it was believed that, in the

long run, the truth would gain all the advantage. The spirit of intolerance is much more akin to the spirit of infidelity, than the bigot is willing to believe; and the charity which exorcises the one, is found in practice the best method of expelling the other.

It was during this period, and at a time when the early zeal and piety of the dissenters was on the decline, that God in his providence raised up Whitefield and Wesley to revive the cause of evangelical religion. Whitefield, who had returned from Georgia, in 1738, and who preached his first sermon in Moorfields on the 29th of April, 1739, was a wonderful instrument in the hands of God in diffusing the gospel in England, Wales, Scotland, and America. Covered with obloquy, and loaded with reproach; sneered at by the profane, and discouraged by many even of the pious; cast out by the established church, and scarcely admitted into the pulpits of dissenters, he endured the pelting of at least half an age.* But for the appearance of such a preacher, infidelity would have triumphed to a much larger extent; while even amongst those who held the truth before, the influence of his presence and labours was as that of "life from the dead." The Independents, amongst others, derived great benefit from Whitefield's ministrations. Some of their ministers, and great numbers of their members, were his converts.

It is worthy of notice, that not only Whitefield and Wesley, and their followers, but the Moravians also, were compelled to take shelter from their persecutors of the church of England, by putting themselves under the protection of the Toleration Act, registering their places of worship, and licensing their

* Ivimey, iii. 280.

preachers. They were thus, however reluctantly, under the necessity of classing themselves with dissenters. "It was a curious phenomenon to behold a whole host of persons who rejected the name of dissenters as an unfounded calumny, who professed themselves the truest sons of the church, attached to her doctrines, ceremonies, and hierarchy, many of whom retained even in their conventicles her liturgy and vestments, and who still communicated at her altars, resorting for protection to 'An act passed to exempt persons dissenting from the Church of England from certain pains and penalties.' Had they professed to dissent, it would have been a question whether the Toleration Act could have afforded them legal protection; for neither this, nor any other law could be intended to provide for all possible futurity, and to gather under its wing every sect, of whatever principles or practices, which might arise in the revolutions of ages. But when the Methodists declared they were not dissenters, how could they claim the advantages of an act made to protect persons dissenting from the Church of England, from the penalties of certain laws?

"Yet, such was the liberality of the times, during the beneficent reign of George the Second, that, whenever any people chose to ask the protection of the Toleration Act, the courts of law kindly considered them as dissenters, and defended them in the quiet enjoyment of their principles and worship." *

In 1745, the final attempt of the Pretender to obtain possession of the British throne, although an

* Bogue and Bennett, iii. 160. From the imprisonment of the Rev. James Shore, in 1849, it would appear that the age of Queen Victoria is less tolerant in some respects, than that of George II.

alarming and disastrous circumstance at the time, was attended by beneficial results. Prince Charles Edward, son of the Pretender, seized the opportunity of the king's absence in Hanover to land in the Western Islands. Edinburgh surrendered without resistance; and having taken up his residence at Holyrood House, he proclaimed his father king of Great Britain. Sir John Cope was defeated by the Highlanders near Preston Pans; and the prince became absolute master of Scotland. He then pushed on to Carlisle, where he was joined by several Scotch lords and other persons of distinction. Indeed, by this time there was sufficient ground for alarm. Preparations were made all over the kingdom, as soon as the first surprise had been overcome, to resist this invasion; and the king having returned from Hanover resolved to take the field in person, and to set up the royal standard on Finchley Common. His Majesty's troops, under the Duke of Cumberland, compelled Prince Charles to retire, first to Glasgow, then to Edinburgh; and at length put an end to the rebellion, in the brief, sanguinary and decisive battle of Culloden. It was in this time of danger that the Dissenters proved their loyalty, and afforded another proof of their fidelity to the house of Hanover. Their pulpits, and their prayer meetings alike, bore witness to the lively interest they took in the success of the conquest. Dr. Doddridge spared neither time nor expense in evincing his patriotism. We learn from Orton's life of this eminent man, that he encouraged his own people to enlist, and performed many other services in defence of the throne. Dr. Watts, another Independent, and too well known, both by his Psalms and Hymns and practical writings, to require further

notice, exerted himself in a similar manner. The Dissenters generally felt that their own liberties were at stake, and acted accordingly. Many of their places of worship in London were employed during the week for mustering and drilling recruits, in order to augment the forces of his majesty's army. By this conduct the Dissenters bound themselves more firmly than ever to the House of Brunswick.

In 1748 the city of London made a law, imposing a fine of four hundred pounds and twenty marks upon every person nominated by the Lord Mayor, who should decline standing the election of Sheriff, by the Common Hall; and six hundred pounds upon every one who, being elected by the Common Hall, should refuse to serve the office. The object of this law was to reach those Dissenters who scrupled to take the sacrament according to the church of England, as the required qualification of the Sheriff's office; and the fines thus levied upon conscientious Dissenters were expressly appropriated to the building of the Mansion House, which still stands in the centre of the city. More than fifteen thousand pounds were obtained in this disreputable manner. In 1754 three Dissenters,—one of whom, Allen Evans, Esq., was an active member of the Committee of Deputies,—were elected to this office. It was thought that the Act of Toleration would protect them from the service and penalties in question, and that the legality of the city bye-law could not be supported; it was resolved, therefore, to have the case tried. The first trial in the Sheriff's Court decided in favour of the city. But the judges determined in 1762 that the decision should be reversed. Not satisfied with this, the Corporation appealed to

the House of Lords, when the decision of the judges was confirmed in favor of the Dissenters. The cause was argued on the 21st and 22nd of January, 1767, and decided on the 3rd and 4th of February. Lord Mansfield won immortal honour by the nervous and eloquent speech he delivered on that occasion. "It is now," said his lordship, "no crime for a man to say he is a dissenter; nor is it a crime for him not to take the sacrament according to the rites of the church of England; nay, the crime is, if he does it contrary to the dictates of his conscience." His lordship then exposed the principles upon which the prosecution was conducted. "In the cause before your lordships," said he, "the defendant was by law incapable at the time of his pretended election; and it is my firm persuasion, that he was chosen because he was incapable. If he had been capable, he had not been chosen; for they did not want him to serve the office. They chose him, because, without a breach of the law, and a usurpation on the crown, he could not serve the office. They chose him, that he might fall under the penalty of their bye-law, made to serve a particular purpose; in opposition to which, and to avoid the fine thereby imposed, he has pleaded a legal disability, grounded on two acts of parliament. As I am of opinion that his plea is good, I conclude with moving, your lordships, That the judgment be affirmed." *

Before this long-pending case was decided, or on the 25th of October, 1760, George the Second died, in the seventy-seventh year of his age, after a reign of more than thirty-three years, and, according to the announcement of the Privy Council, "beloved,

* Sketch of the History and Proceedings of the Dissenters, etc., pp. 25—39.

honoured, and regretted by his subjects." He maintained the Toleration inviolable, and fulfilled his promises of protection to the dissenters. Whatever the character of his policy out of England, at home it was just, forbearing and liberal. The Independents, Baptist and pædo-Baptist, deplored his removal as that of a paternal prince, who had "guarded the liberties and promoted the interests of a dutiful and affectionate people."*

George the Third, grandson of the late king, and a "Briton born," now ascended the throne at the age of twenty-two. His long reign of more than half a century was very eventful, both at home and abroad. He was succeeded by George the Fourth in 1820, and by William the Fourth in 1830. Our present beloved and gracious sovereign came to the throne on June the 20th, 1837, and was crowned on June the 28th of the following year. We can only mention a few even of those events in which the liberties of the Independents were concerned during these successive reigns.

In 1772 the general body of ministers of the three denominations in London resolved to seek parliamentary relief from subscription. They proposed an alteration in the Toleration Act, which required them to subscribe to articles of the Church of England in order to protection; and in April succeeded in passing their bill through the House of Commons. The Lords, however, rejected it, notwithstanding the eloquent advocacy of the great Earl of Chatham, and Lords Mansfield, Camden, and Shelburne. The next year the attempt was renewed, and again without success. It was on this occasion that Earl Chatham

* Sermon on occasion of the death of George the Second, by Samuel Stennett.

uttered the following memorable words, in reply to the accusations of Dr. Drummond, Archbishop of York. "The dissenting ministers," he said, "are represented as men of close ambition. They are so, my Lords; and their ambition is to keep close to the college of fishermen, not of Cardinals; and to the doctrines of inspired Apostles, not to the decrees of interested and aspiring Bishops. They contend for a scriptural and spiritual worship; we have a Calvinistic creed, a Popish liturgy, and Arminian clergy. The Reformation has laid open the Scriptures to all; let not the Bishops shut them again. Laws in support of ecclesiastical power are pleaded, which it would shock humanity to execute. It is said religious sects have done great mischief when they were not kept under restraints; but history affords no proof that sects have ever been mischievous when they were not oppressed and persecuted by the ruling church."*

In March 1779, Sir Henry Houghton, a faithful friend to the Dissenters, again brought the subject of subscription before the House, and succeeded in obtaining a measure of relief. An Act was passed releasing the Dissenting Ministers from subscription to the articles of the Church of England, and substituting a declaration that they were Christians and Protestants, and received the Scriptures as their rule of faith and practice. Dissenting schoolmasters were also relieved from the penalties to which they were liable for teaching youths without a license from a Bishop, and taking the sacrament at the altars of the Established Church. Some dissenters appear to have been bigoted enough to object to the relief thus pro-

* It was about this time, or in 1774, that the celebrated Robert Robinson, of Cambridge, published his letters on toleration, under the title of Arcana.

vided, on the ground that it might prove subversive of Trinitarian doctrine.*

In the following year those alarming riots, which are known by the name of the Lord George Gordon riots, took place in London and the vicinity. They originated in an attempt, on the part of the Protestant Associations which had been formed throughout the kingdom, to resist some measures of relief for the Roman Catholics then engaging the attention of Parliament. Thirty thousand people assembled in St. George's Fields, on the 2nd of June, and accompanied Lord George Gordon to the House of Commons for the purpose of presenting the petition against the Catholics. The scenes which followed the rejection of the petition are a disgrace to protestantism and humanity.† The relief attempted amounted to nothing more than a repeal of some of the cruel penal statutes against the Catholics, without conferring upon them any measure of political power. It is to be regretted that some of the dissenters joined in the agitation of this period, and that Alderman Ball, a baptist, one of the city members, expressed his approval of the petitions which emanated from the protestant associations About the same time, the subject of the slave trade came under general notice; and it deserves to be recorded that the Independents from that day to the present, took an active part in seeking the universal abolition of that unhallowed traffic.

In 1786, the committee of deputies took into consideration once more the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts; and in March of the following year procured the services of some eminent members of

* Ivimey, iv., 32, 33.

† They have been described with great effect in Charles Dickens' Barnaby Rudge.

the House of Commons, in promoting their object; amongst the rest, of that great orator Charles James Fox. In consequence of the influence of Lord North and William Pitt, the measure was lost. In 1789 and 1790, the attempt was renewed; but with similar results. The French Revolution, which occurred a little before the last attempt, had excited the fears of many who formerly professed themselves friends of liberty, and inflamed the passions of multitudes against the dissenters.

On the 9th of May, 1811, the year after the formation of the Society for the Protection of Religious liberty, Lord Sidmouth introduced his famous bill, "To explain and render more effectual the acts of 1st of William and Mary, and the 19th of George the Third, so far as they relate to the Protestant dissenting ministers." This bill provided, that in order for any man to obtain a qualification as a preacher, he should have the recommendation of at least six respectable housekeepers of the congregation to which he belonged, and that be should actually have a congregation that was willing to listen to his instructions. With regard to preachers who were itinerant, it provided that they should bring a testimonial from six housekeepers, that they were of sober life and character, and qualified to perform the functions of preachers. On the 21st of May, the bill was read a second time and discussed. The dissenters had everywhere taken alarm, and petitioned against it. Seven hundred petitions were presented on this memorable evening. Earl Stanhope presented one signed by more than two thousand persons, and observed, "I have no doubt, if the bill be persisted in, the petitioners against it must be counted not by thousands, but by millions." The Wesleyan Methodists were at

this time a large body, and Lord Erskine presented from them alone two hundred and fifty petitions. The scene in the House of Lords during the bringing up of the petitions was the most remarkable ever witnessed before that period. After a long discussion, the bill was thrown out without a division.

In June, 1812, Lord Stanhope was unsuccessful in endeavouring to pass a measure for preventing dissenters from being liable to certain penalties arising from the imperfect provisions of the Toleration Act. Some intolerant and persecuting proceedings had been taken against them by forced constructions of that act; and his lordship, with Lords Holland and Landsdowne, and some others, were very earnest in their attempt to carry the bill. Although defeated on this occasion, they were sustained by the petitions of all classes of dissenters, and in the following month procured an act which repealed certain previous acts "relating to religious worship and assemblies, and persons teaching and preaching therein." The royal assent was given on the 23rd of July, and such were the benefits of the measure, that it became generally known by the name of "The New Toleration Act."

On the 28th of February, 1828, an act was passed repealing the Corporation and Test Acts in favour of protestant dissenters, to which the royal assent was given on the 9th of May following. The following year witnessed the passing of the Roman Catholic Relief Bill. From that day to the present the spirit of British legislation has advanced with the improved views of the age; and although from time to time retrograde movements are attempted by the advocates of religious establishments, there seems little reason to doubt that ere long the voice of the people, which

waxes louder and louder against all civil interference with the religion of the nation, will prevail. The advantages now enjoyed by the Independents and all other denominations of dissenters are invaluable, and such as call for gratitude to that over-ruling Providence which has furthered their efforts from age to age in the advancement of the general liberty. But complete justice can never be done, until the precedent of the United States be adopted by the mother country, and dissent itself is destroyed by the absolute separation between church and state.

In concluding the imperfect account presented in this chapter of the progress of Independency under the House of Brunswick, it may be observed, that the last statistical report of the body states the number of congregational churches in Great Britain and Ireland to be 2,173, and the number of ministers, exclusive of itinerants and lay agents, 1,979. From other sources we learn that the baptists in Great Britain and Ireland possess about 2,000 places of worship. Thus the principles of Independency are advocated at the present time by between four and five thousand congregations of Christians. Add to these the public and collegiate institutions supported by each denomination respectively, and it will not be questioned that those principles have laid firm hold upon the minds of the people of this country. In proportion as increased regard is paid to the authority of scripture in matters of Christian polity, it is only to be expected that they will spread; until they become generally recognized as the only principles consistent with a complete recognition of individual and social freedom.

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